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# MONTH NSPORT



JOHN DEVANEY

Immediately after he turned in the incisive interview with Wayne Embry that appears in our Special Section on Greed in sports, John Devaney dashed off to spring training with a disgusted look on his face. Devaney, a freelance writer whose work has appeared in this magazine for over 15 years (he also wrote the story on race-car driver Tom Sneva on page 62), was as distressed about what avarice is doing to our games as Embry is about what it has done to his game, pro basketball. "Many players are now more concerned about protecting their earning power than about performing," says Embry. "The fans pay an inflated price for a tarnished product. . . ."

Still, when Devaney returned from Florida after viewing a number of baseball teams, there was a warm smile on his face. "I met several players who were battling to make the major leagues, and greed had nothing to do with their motivation," Devaney said. "I was particularly impressed by a brief visit with a 23-year-old catcher in the Phils' organization, Bill Nahorodny, who hit .292 with 23 homers and 78 RBIs at Oklahoma City in 1976. "We sat in the Phils' dugout one afternoon and Bill told me how he got started in baseball in Hamtramck, Mich., and somehow it took me back to the way sports used to be:

"'My father drove a taxicab and didn't make a hell of a lot of money,' Nahorodny said. 'But whenever I asked him for a glove, he'd come home with one even if it cost him a full day's pay. He wanted me to play baseball because he was wild about it. I was cut out to be a big-league baseball player from birth. Now I'm here and, believe me, I can't tell you how great I feel.'

"Later, Bill caught the game against the Yankees," Devaney continued. "Reggie Jackson, who is built like a halfback and who plays hard no matter how much money he makes, raced toward home from second on a single. Bill blocked the plate and the throw from the outfield skipped by Nahorodny as Jackson rammed him. Bill didn't budge, and Jackson sailed over him, landing several feet beyond the plate. Bill screamed for the ball and the pitcher, backing up, flipped it to him. Bill lunged and tagged out Jackson to end the inning. Then Bill ran off the field and all the way into the dugout with his right fist pumping air as if he had just made the last putout of the World Series. To me, it was like watching a Little Leaguer's fantasy come to life."

But Bill Nahorodny's dream of playing in the big leagues was set back two weeks later when the Phils returned him to Oklahoma City. "They didn't say why," Bill told us. "I've made five All-Star teams in five years and won numerous awards, yet at spring training nobody cared. I asked for a raise and a three-year contract, and they didn't even make a counter-offer, so I'm playing out my option. I'm not bitter, and I can look anyone in the eye and say I'm not greedy. I feel like I'm a big-league ball-player right now and, after I become a free agent, next season I'll be up there. And I'm gonna do a good job for a lot of years."

So Bill Nahorodny is playing out his option, not because he is one of those players whom Wayne Embry characterizes as being "more concerned about protecting their earning power than about performing." Nahorodny just wants to play in the major leagues because he says "that's what I was born to do."

Beny Stainback



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# SPORT TALKSS

#### "COACH, WHY DID YOU LEAVE?"

College football coaches, whose jobs by definition are tenuous, certainly have every right to seek better positions. But college football coaches, also by definition, have a clear cut obligation to the young men they so vigorously recruit, the 17- and 18-year-old high school stars who sign on with these coaches whom they look up to as father figures. The most successful coaches are, invariably, among the very best recruiters of young, talented players.

Last season no coach was more successful than Johnny Majors, who in only four years at the University of Pittsburgh turned the losing Panthers into national champions. Just before season's end, though, Majors announced that he was quitting Pitt to become the coach at the University of Tennessee, which had not won a national championship in 26 years and which had failed to win the Southeastern Conference championship in seven years.

The media made much of the fact that Majors, a native Tennessean, was returning to his alma mater, where as a unanimous All-American tailback in the mid-1950s he had led the team in rushing, passing and punting and finished second to Paul Hornung in the 1956 Heisman Trophy balloting.

But nobody pointed out that in leaving Pitt, Majors had to break his \$75,000-per-annum contract, which had a year to run. He also deserted a slew of freshmen, sophomores and juniors who, when Majors recruited them, were undoubtedly convinced that he would be their football coach throughout their collegiate

This wasn't the first time Majors had broken a contract. In 1972, after coaching at lowa State for five years, he left that school for Pitt with four years remaining on a new contract that had been awarded him by ecstatic school officials after Majors had led lowa to the 1971 Sun Bowl—the first appearance in any bowl in the school's history.

Which brings us to the point: In deserting the players he recruited, what does Johnny Majors teach those young men about meeting responsibilities? What exactly does Johnny Majors say to a prospective player who is aware of the

Johnny Majors says it's "never easy" to leave his recruits—but that didn't stop him from breaking his contract at Pitt. coach's contract-breaking history? What is Majors' answer to a young man who asks him, "Coach, why did you leave lowa State and Pitt and how do I know you're not going to do it again?"

"I think that's an intelligent question," Majors said recently, speaking in his slow, controlled, down-home drawl. "If you're a recruit and you ask me why I left, I'd say, 'Hell, it's difficult to explain it exactly because I had a lot more positive reasons to stay at Pitt than negative reasons not to stay. And I think the same way about Tennessee—there were more positive reasons to be here than negative reasons not to be here. The way you look at a decision like this is that there's never a perfect answer."

And what did Majors say to the Pitt players when word leaked out that he was leaving them?

"It's never easy," Majors said, "to break a relationship when you've recruited a young man personally, been in his home, talked to his parents and sold all of them on playing for you. But there are two words that don't exist in my vocabulary. One of 'em is 'never' and the other one is 'always.' I've never told a kid I'd never leave a school and I've never told a kid I'd always stay at a school. If I was ever challenged or confronted on that by a parent, I'd just say to them, 'Look, what can I tell



you? Every year's a new year."

"Listen," Majors went on, "I just don't believe that you can bullshit a kid. You can't tell any of them anything that you can't back up because they count on the commitments you made to them."

One of Majors' most coveted prospects last year was six-foot-two, 180-pound Robert Alexander. Alexander (aka Alexander the Great, The Big A, Rapid Robert) scored 34 touchdowns and rushed for 2,177 yards for West Virginia's South Charleston High.

"Coach Majors talked to me," Alexander recalled recently, "when Pitt played West Virginia here [Nov. 13, 1976]. He wanted me to commit myself to Pitt, but I knew he had moved around a lot in his career and I knew that he was going to Tennessee from the beginning. That's his home state and that's where he and his brothers all played.

"I liked him," Alexander continued, "but a couple of things about him really bothered me: First, I wanted to make sure that I'd have the same coach for four years. That's why I was skeptical about going to Ohio State—because of coach [Woody] Hayes' bad health. I asked coach Majors if he was going to Tennessee. He came out and told me that it was a rumor and as of then he hadn't even thought about it. I mean, I knew he was going to Tennessee and he knew it, too, but the man just wasn't being up front with me."

Majors announced that he was leaving Pitt for Tennessee—less than three weeks after he had told Alexander he "hadn't even thought about" such a move. Then several of Majors' assistants at Pitt, who had gone with him to Tennessee, contacted Alexander.

"That was pretty funny," Alexander said. "When I visited Pitt, all those guys talked about was how great Majors was and how great Pitt was and how they would never leave. Then, when they got to Tennessee, they told me, "Well, ah, let me explain my reasons for leaving Pitt." After they told me their reasons, they said I could play as a freshman at Tennessee, but they knew that I knew that Tennessee has five running backs returning this fall. I dunno . . . it's amazing how these guys change their minds and attitudes from one school to another. That really turned me off."

Alexander didn't even visit Tennessee after Majors moved there. After paring his list of 200 schools down to three—Maryland, Penn State and West Virginia—Alexander chose West Virginia.

—TOM MURRAY

#### **NEVER ON SATURDAY**

At a time in sports when it is not unusual to see and read about superstars and journeymen alike jousting with management for enormous sums of money, a rookie for the Milwaukee Brewers held out this spring not for a million-dollar, multi-year contract, but for the right to observe the tenets of his faith.

Dan Thomas, 25, is a former No. 1 draft pick of the Brewers in 1972, an Eastern League Triple Crown winner, and a devout follower of



Garner Ted Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Thomas has refused to play baseball from sundown Fridays until sundown Saturdays because the WWCG considers that period the Sabbath, a day of rest.

"We tried to arrange an exemption for Dan with the church," Brewers' general manager Jim Baumer said, "but were unable to do so."

With 40 of the Brewers' 162 games scheduled for Friday nights and Saturday afternoons, Baumer was asked if he would keep Thomas on the roster. "Well, right now, with a week to go before we break camp," Baumer said, "it looks like we will carry him. The other guys know he's a good ballplayer, that he can be an asset to the club, and we don't foresee any problem along those lines. I do wish we had the power to be able to use him all the time, however."

Thomas has said that he will travel with the team on the Sabbath, having been taught that Christ himself took some road trips on Saturdays.

#### -DAVID MURRAY

#### AN EX-OWNER'S LAMENT

After nearly a quarter of a century as a baseball executive, Joseph A. W. Iglehart recently resigned as a minority owner of the New York Yankees because he would rather leave the game he loves than be a party to the current spending boom which he feels is ruining his sport.

"I'm very fond of [Yankee owner] George Steinbrenner, but while he might have been a very successful shipbuilder, he doesn't know much about baseball," Iglehart said at his home outside Baltimore, lalehart's primary business is managing money—he's chairman of the finance committee at CBS. "I decided to sell my stock in the Yankees because I think Steinbrenner's spending too damn much money. I think some of these players are not worth anything bordering on what they're getting. I don't mean to say that you can pay your player two dollars when everybody else is getting four dollars, but you don't have to go out and pay them six dollars for the next ten years. They may play just as hard, but I can't believe they will. I watched this fellow Wayne Garland pitch down here in Baltimore for three years and, hell, he had one good year-and did you see the contract he got from Cleveland [\$2.3 million for ten years]? I just think it's ridiculous."

Iglehart reached for a standard major-league contract and in his flinty voice solemnly read what he considers its most important clause, paragraph 3a: "'A player agrees to perform his services hereunder diligently and faithfully, to keep himself in first-class physical condition and to obey the club's training rules and pledges himself to the American public and to the club to conform to the highest standards of personal conduct, fair play and good sports-

manship.' By God, that's a wonderful paragraph, you know. If every kid today would live up to that one, I wouldn't give a damn what you paid them.

"But there are players today who don't give a damn thing about anything except themselves. You saw Mickey Rivers play in the World Series—well, God almighty, the guy killed the Yankees. A guy going to first who looks and sees that the shortstop has an easy play, then turns into the dugout . . . you can't have that kind of a thing as an example.

"I think it's going to be tough to manage now, you don't have much control when players get so they say, 'Play me or trade me,' "Iglehart continued, his voice getting angry. "You take that Lenny Randle incident where he hit his manager, Frank Lucchesi. It stinks. So his manager had called him a punk. He certainly proved he was a punk by his behavior. If I had



Jackie Stewart won two world driving championships, but that didn't help him avoid a crash on a road near his home.

my way, I'd throw Randle out of the game permanently. A guy like that is really dangerous."

Iglehart had just returned from spring training where, for the first time since he became chairman of the board of the Baltimore Orioles in 1954, he wasn't a part of the game. He said he misses it terribly: "I'm prejudiced, but I think baseball is the finest game in the world, and when I get in a ballpark I forget all this stuff. I may be a child about it, but I do. This game has given me nothing but pleasure until this year. But I'm going to be there opening day, and every other day I can. I just happen to love the game and I hope if I ever get too old to love it, somebody will shoot me."

-ROGER DIRECTOR

#### WHEN JACKIE STEWART LOST CONTROL

I'm about to become part of the upholstery of a new Ford Fiesta. I'm pressed up against the passenger door so hard I'm sure I'll have to be crow-barred off. I owe my present intimacy with Decor Group vinyl to the driving ability of the man flinging this sedan through turn one of the two-mile-long Ontario Motor Speedway Infield Road Course. His name is Jackie Stewart.

Scotsman Stewart is one of a handful of Grand Prix racers who have won two world driving championships. Although retired since 1973, Jackie hasn't lost his skills. The Fiesta describes perfect 90-mile-an-hour arcs around each corner, and Stewart drives as though there are eggs taped to the pedals and the steering wheel is made of China. Yet he chatters nonstop as if we were casually halted at a stoplight. Stewart is one of the few men in the world who retains total control of an automobile at speeds that normally would clench the teeth and foam the lips of an amateur racer like myself.

But Jackie says he had an accident a while ago. It happened as he drove his German Ford sedan down from his hilltop home in Geneva one morning.

"I was driving downhill very sedately," he related with a chuckle in his high-pitched Scottish accent as he effortlessly hurtled our car through a tight righthander. "I was only going about 30 miles an hour and I hit a patch of ice. I lost control. I spun around a curve and then I saw it—a curbside petrol station and what looked to be a brand-new Volkswagen getting gas.

"I tried every trick I knew to get out of the skid—turning the wheel in the direction of the skid, turning it back the other way, stabbing at the gas pedal, pulling on the emergency brake, jabbing at the foot brake—but there was no way I was going to miss the car. Oh, my God! I thought, I'll crash into the car and the petrol pumps will explode! So I started planning: I'll unbuckle my seatbelt and run uphill because the petrol will flow downhill, and then I'll run and get my family because the whole village is going to burn down.

"Wham! I hit the car, really banging the side in. The crash was loud enough to wake up the whole village, but there was no explosion. So I got out and looked for the owner. I was sort of embarrassed. I was a world champion and here I'd come sliding into this guy's brand new car like I couldn't even drive.

"I went into the station and began talking to the owner, who spoke French. I don't speak the language too well and he just nodded and smiled because he thought I was talking about the weather. So I took him outside by the arm to see his car. By then he was sort of ga-ga. You know, over there, race drivers are big national figures. So he looked at me and looked at his car, and looked back at me and said, 'Who did this?' 'Me,' I answered. 'You—Jackie Stewart,' he said, 'Jackie Stewart did this? Fantastique!' Fantastique!' He was delighted."

-RICHARD CEPPOS

# Coke add life to...

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Bert and Soudy

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Marcie

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# GOOD TIMES. ESTATEMENT OF THE STATE OF THE S







THE GODFATHER OF **INSTANT LEAGUES?** 

drove either a Jaguar or a Mercedes and lived in beachfront splendor with his wife and four children in a \$200,000 home.

"I wasn't greedy, though," Davidson said recently, when told that many people believed his methods were the beginnings of the greed strangling sports today. "I just happened to be an industrial-league basketball player when a couple of people asked me if I'd be interested in helping to form the ABA. And I got involved. That's all. I had no master plan."

For someone who had no master plan, Davidson kept pretty busy, immersing himself in Jacksonville teams got into trouble, for instance, we should have dropped them from the league right away. Instead, we tried to make their payroll and in doing that we weakened the other six teams. So rather than ending the season with six strong, solvent teams, we lost the weak ones anyway and greatly depleted the six stronger franchises. It was like being on a rescue mission with six strong men trying to save six weak men: The six strong guys have to carry the six dying guys and you end up with six dead guys and six weak guys who can't make the distance, anyway.

"What people don't realize," Davidson went on, "is that starting a new league is like starting 12 new businesses simultaneously in 12 different spots in the world. It's a risky venture at best and with a bad economy, it's even worse. So it was impossible for us to stay in ex-

vidson's seemingly idyllic marriage was also many as the United States."

thing, however, Davidson admitted that he'd have to do some very serious thinking. "I certainly think it's possible," he said, "but it would be extremely difficult without really heavy financing. I've thought about it a lot, sure, and I know there's a great demand in certain localities for pro football and there's a lot of talent, but. . . . " He paused, his voice trailing off. "I dunno, I've traveled so much and been away from home so long that I don't know whether I really want to start doing that all over again. My only interest in traveling now is to go down to Acapulco to play tennis."

So, Davidson was asked, despite the divorce and the failure of the WFL, at least you're

"Oh, sure," Davidson replied. "I still play tennis and I go eat at the good restaurants and I drive a nice car . . . but I lost just about everything else through the divorce and bad breaks in business. I'm basically rebuilding so I can

mite wistfully, "everybody thinks I was really greedy and made all those millions of dollars. Well," he said, with an unconvincing laugh, "I would have made much more money if I'd stayed away from everything in 1967 and stuck to real estate."

istence " When the WFL was nearing extinction, Da-

on the verge of breaking up. In an effort to avert divorce, Davidson said, he severed all ties with the league. The marriage broke up anyway, and Davidson returned to his Newport Beach-based business-California Real Estate Trust—a company he still operates today. He maintains his interest in sports, and, when asked what league he'd start today if he could, he unhesitatingly replied: "Footballon an international level. I'd put five teams in the States, maybe one in Mexico City, a few in Europe and continue on that basis. There's a tremendous market for it over there, you know; Europe has 600 million TV sets-three times as Before he could even consider doing such a

still living pretty well?

"It's funny," Gary Davidson concluded, a

It's a shame he didn't.



#### **Gary Davidson**

In his essay beginning on page 19, Roy Blount illustrates how today's greed in sports is producing a generation of predatory agents, contract-jumping players, monopolistic owners and-saddest of all-angry fans. The question, though, is who or what is at the roots of these long-term, million-dollar contracts, notrade clauses and outlandish ticket prices?

As far as many people are concerned, one of the primary instigators of all these problems is Gary Davidson, a 42-year-old attorney, real estate entrepreneur and self-proclaimed super organizer and salesman. From 1967-'74, Davidson's main occupation was getting together with his friends, dreaming up professional sports leagues, and then inducing affluent investors to purchase franchises.

During those seven years, Davidson was the creator and first president of the now-defunct World Football League, a co-founder and first president of both the now-defunct American Basketball Association and semi-comatose World Hockey Association, and a consultant to the founders of World Team Tennis (WTT) and the now-defunct International Track Association. While investing very little of his own money in these ventures, Davidson-worth only \$50,000 in 1967-was leading the extravagant lifestyle of a millionaire by 1974. He

organizing or helping to organize football, hockey and basketball franchises in 56 different cities. He earned the president's salary from each of the three leagues (ABA, WHA, WFL) and, whenever a franchise was sold to a group of investors, he also collected a "founder's fee"—sometimes as much as \$300,000.

While Davidson worked tirelessly at establishing all three leagues, he is best known for his involvement with the WFL, a venture he admits was his pet project.

"I'm very defensive about the WFL whenever it's criticized," Davidson said, "because of all the leagues I was involved in, it was the best organized, the best financed and the best structured. The fact that it folded can be attributed to bad timing. When the prime interest rate [for borrowing money] went to 12 percent, the money guys who would have made potential owners in the league didn't want to gamble with their money. To buy a sports franchise, you've got to be willing to lose two or three million dollars and these guys-because of the economy and the fact that the stock market went right to hell-just weren't interested in doing

"On top of that, we made some pretty bad management mistakes. When the Detroit and

# PORT QUIZQ

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#### **Bobby Grich**

- 1. Who is the only pitcher to hurl a no-hitter in each of his first two seasons in the major leagues?
- a. Johnny Vander Meer
- b. Steve Busby
- c. Virgil Trucks
- **2.** True or False: The highest-paid team in the NBA did not make the playoffs in 1976-77.
- **3.** Of these three new California Angels, which player received the largest contract after the 1977 free agent draft?
- a. Bobby Grich
- b. Don Baylor
- c. Joe Rudi
- **4.** In the summer of 1972, Derek Sanderson signed a contract with the now-defunct Philadelphia Blazers of the WHA for a reported \$2.5 million over ten years. How many goals did he score in the previous season with the Boston Bruins?
- a. 19
- **b.** 25
- c. 28
- **5.** Which one of these PGA tournaments offered the richest first prize (\$45,000) in 1976?
- a. U.S. Open
- **b.** The Masters
- c. PGA Championship



#### **Don Baylor**

- **6.** Which one of these baseball players renounced agents and negotiated his own contract in 1977?
- a. Bill Buckner
- b. Joe Ferguson
- c. Richie Hebner
- **7.** The average price of a top ticket at an NHL game in 1967 was \$6.50. What is the average cost of the same ticket today?
- **a.** \$8.60
- **b.** \$9.70
- c. \$11.10
- **8.** Which one of these pro football players received the largest per-year contract ever negotiated for a rookie?
- a. Steve Bartkowski
- b. Joe Namath
- c. O.J. Simpson
- **9.** In 1966, three PGA golfers made over \$100,000 in winnings on the tour. How many reached that figure in 1976?
- **a.** 15
- b. 19
- c. 24
- **10.** Which one of the following football coaches enjoyed the longest winning streak in college football—while his team was on probation?
- a. Bear Bryant
- b. Bud Wilkinson
- c. Duffy Daugherty
- **11.** Which one of the following tennis players has never played Jimmy Connors in a challenge match for a six-figure, winner-take-all purse?
- a. Bjorn Borg
- b. Manuel Orantes
- c. Rod Laver
- **12.** Which one of the following baseball rookies held out this spring for a contract worth \$40,000 per year—without one at bat in the major leagues?
- a. Dale Murphy, Atlanta
- b. Dave Rozema, Detroit
- c. Bump Wills, Texas

- **13.** Which Cincinnati Red is *not* represented by agent Jerry Kapstein?
- a. Pete Rose
- b. Dave Concepcion
- c. Rawley Eastwick
- **14.** Which one of these college basketball coaches claims to have been offered two-anda-half percent of a contract by an agent who wished to sign one of his players?
- a. Dean Smith, North Carolina
- b. Denny Crum, Louisville
- c. Dave Gavitt, Providence
- **15.** Which major-league team led the league in 1976 in fewest double plays made?
- a. St. Louis Cardinals
- b. Montreal Expos
- c. New York Mets
- 16. Which one of these NFL players, in direct



#### Joe Rudi

violation of NCAA rules, signed a financial agreement with an agent while still in college?

- a. Wilbur Jackson
- b. Greg Pruitt
- c. John Matuszak
- **17.** Which woman tennis player holds a lifetime edge playing against Chris Evert?
- a. Nancy Richey
- b. Peaches Bartkowicz
- c. Evonne Goolagong
- **18.** Who won the 1968 Masters Tournament, the year in which Roberto deVicenzo was eliminated from a sudden death playoff for signing an incorrect score card?
- a. George Archer
- **b.** Gay Brewer
- c. Bob Goalby
- **19.** Which one of these players holds the record for hitting safely in the most consecutive World Series games (17)?
- a. Hank Bauer
- b. Roberto Clemente
- c. Bobby Richardson

#### FOR ANSWERS TURN TO PAGE 95

# SEARS ROAD HANDLER. 15% better wet cornering traction than "The Tire That Beat The Baja."

#### HOW SEARS ROADHANDLER SET A NEW WET DRIVING RECORD FOR SEARS TIRES.

When it rains, the most important feature any tire can deliver is traction.

And RoadHandler delivers.

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#### Other wet driving improvements:

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• RoadHandler has a deeper tread for

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• RoadHandler has 15% better wet cornering traction as determined under carefully controlled laboratory conditions.

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With 40,000 miles of relentless day and night driving already behind them, a set of four Sears RoadHandlers took on and tamed the rugged 2,000-mile route of the old Pony Express.

Afterward, these same Sears tires not only passed but exceeded every Federal Safety Standard for *new* tires. (RoadHandler still had over 2½ times the tread area strength required by law.)

Even when laboratory engineers subjected these Sears RoadHandlers

to thorough X-Ray examination, not a single tire failure of any kind.

Anywhere.

We don't call it the RoadHandler for nothing.







"Straight talk, good values and satisfaction."

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# **DETTERS**TOSPORT

#### **BOO, GEORGE ATKINSON**

George Atkinson (The Oakland Raiders' Charming Assassin, April) is not quite as dumb as he sounds. He realizes that he is not skilled enough to cover a multi-talented receiver like Lynn Swann. Thus, he compensates for his lack of natural ability by using brutal tactics.

However, Mr. Atkinson would be wise to refrain from using such adjectives as "gutless" to describe Swann. After all, George is going to look silly enough as it is when Swann crosses the goal line and spikes the ball in his face the next time they meet.

#### John Murphy San Bruno, Ca.

Just what is George Atkinson's idea of a "pussy sport"? If he is referring to women's athletics (since girls are the only people who wear dresses—we hope) then we guess he doesn't know much about sports. If running your guts out, conditioning your body for years, and disciplining yourself to the point of near physical perfection are "pussy" qualities, then I think Atkinson's idea of a "pussy sport" should be defined. Either that or give George a dress. By the way, what size does he wear?

#### Denice Torres Debbie Sattler New York, N.Y.

Your story on George Atkinson was totally disgusting. That bull he was shooting off about why he hit Lynn Swann was unbelievable. He is one of the worst examples of a professional football player in the history of the game. No matter if he really is a nice guy off the field, the way he plays football on it is completely wrong and sickening. Intimidation is one thing, but being dirty is another. There is no excuse for his deeds on the field, and what he really deserved from Rozelle was about a \$10,000 fine and a suspension. If, as he says, other teams play the same way against offensive players, why don't those players get concussions?

I agree with Russ Francis 100 percent. When Atkinson is in a wheelchair, let's hope he'll take it like a man and realize that he was only being intimidated.

Curt Rogers Uniontown, Pa.

#### YEA, REGGIE JACKSON

Although I agree with Ed Linn that baseball free agents have been overpaid (Psssst .... Want To Buy a Pennant, April), I must object to his concept of the "perfect mix" and his simplistic view of the role of any one individual in a team's success or failure. Of particular note is his opinion of Reggie Jackson's performance as a Baltimore Oriole. I seriously doubt that the Orioles would have been a better team without Jackson. That the team did not produce a pen-

nant winner was due to a great extent on the failure of some of the other 24 Orioles and to the fine season of the Yankees. The quoting of Jim Palmer concerning Jackson's playing abilities demonstrated both an absence of sound judgment on Palmer's part and a lack of journalistic expertise on the part of Mr. Linn.

Mat Rapacz St. Johnsville, N.Y.

#### LOONEY AT PEACE

I would like to commend Richard O'Connor for a first-class article on Joe Don Looney (Joe Don Looney Finds Peace with Baba, March). The editors note the story was O'Connor's first article for SPORT and I hope it will not be his last. Through past history and present evaluation he has let us find Joe Looney, a man who has followed his mind, something we all wish we were able to do. I have reread the article twice and plan on keeping it to read again at a future date when I'm feeling misplaced because it shows that we should follow our heart, do what we feel is best and the hell with what the rest of the world says. It's great that Joe Don Looney did not let everyone else dictate who he should be. We can all learn from his example.

#### A. Joseph Zawatski San Antonio, Tex.

When a friend of mine—a reader of SPORT who was aware of my participation in one of Baba Muktananda's encounters this past summer—handed me your magazine story on Joe Don Looney, I was certain it would be typical of most sportswriters who view any spiritual activity by an athlete as demeaning.

I was wrong. The story aptly portrayed the feelings I and many of my friends encountered at Muktananda's Ashrom.

#### Armond Sweeney Hicksville, N.Y.

I was extremely buoyant to see SPORT deal with such a sensitive issue as Joe Looney's conversion so understandingly. I am not a disciple of any bioenergetic group. My preoccupation is sports. Over the years—as a coach—I was unbearably hard on players who I assumed were not, in the idiom of coaching, living up to their potential.

Most coaches, as I did, have a tendency to think anyone who can hit, shoot, or pass must pursue athletics. Wrong. Joe Don Looney's difficulties stemmed from his dissatisfaction with sports. It was something imposed on him.

At present he is a happy, well-adjusted individual. He has found a contentment which most of us are forever striving for. I truly admire him. His story makes me cringe at the thought that many of the athletes I have coached were treated unjustly by my prejudices. Super job, SPORT.

#### Name and address withheld by request

#### **OLD GREEN EYES**

In your article on Joe Namath (For Namath, Frustration . . . & Blackberry Brandy, March) Jimmy Breslin wrote: "Namath looked up from his drink. His blue eyes probed her face." Joseph William Namath, quarterback of the New York Jets has green eyes.

Didn't Breslin see Namath before he wrote the article or is he always that unobservant of his subject?

Rose Lenker Hummelstown, Pa.

#### YEA, WARD; BOO, STAUBACH

I have finished reading all the negative reactions to your article on Roger Staubach (Roger Staubach, Triple Threat: He Runs, Passes, & Walks on Water, January) including Staubach's own criticism of author Robert Ward, but in my opinion the article was excellent. Instead of praising Staubach's simplistic and somewhat intolerant attitudes on religion, drugs and our country, Ward produced a tough, probing and skeptical piece of journalism. In spite of his athletic success on the football field, Staubach is a poignant, somewhat tragic figure in the "real world" as he calls it. He is a simple man of absolute values living in a complex, relativistic modern society, and it is Staubach-not the liberated denizens of "Tinseltown" like Jennifer O'Neill-who finds it difficult to accept the reality of the outside world.

Ward was kind enough not to point out the obvious hypocrisy in Staubach's attitude, his belief that he can and should use his position as a well-known entertainer—and what else is a professional athlete?—to peddle his religious beliefs, but that it is somehow wrong for Miss O'Neill to use her popularity to spread her philosophy of sexual freedom.

#### Philip von Richardson Delevan, N.Y.

Just a note to let you know that—in spite of the constant stream of indignant, reactionary drivel aimed at writers such as SPORT's Robert Ward (re his Staubach article)—there are a few readers capable of understanding material that breaks past trite cliches and fawning admiration, and attempts that rarest of feats in sports journalism: Insight.

There is something wrong with the American sports fan when he no longer wants to hear the truth. "Patriots" and "moralists" who write letters castigating writers like Ward for using his intelligence in what could hardly be termed an outrageous manner, however, seem to be multiplying like flies, with nary a fly swatter to squash their illusions about our athletes.

Ward's article on Jim Barnett (Suddenly It's Over: The NBA Odyssey of Jim Barnett, March) was another superb example of a journalist having the courage to go beyond the sports world's long-established practice of back patting at the "right" moment and screaming in pious outrage when an athlete steps out of bounds. Are North Americans so desperate to believe in our illusions about our society that we have to kill the realities to do it? I'd prefer to read sports articles by Ward than Pat Boone!

Michael Devine Toronto, Can.

Letters To SPORT 641 Lexington Ave New York, N.Y. 10022



### (A SPECIAL SECTION)

# GREED

### Look What It's Done to Our Games

I'M NOT GONNA FREEZE MY WAY THROUGH ANOTHER WORLD SERIES NIGHT GAME.

COLLEGE RECRUITERS
ARE GETTING
RIDICULOUS.

HE COACHED THEM TO A TITLE, THEN JUMPED HIS CONTRACT.

YEAH, NOW HE'S COACH-OF-THE-YEAR...,
AND THEY'RE
ON PROBATION.

HOORAY

THIS YEAR
THEY'LL HAVE
TO BRING IN
RELIEF
PITCHERS
ON DOGSLEDS.

THE LAST
SEATTLE
BASEBALL TEAM
WENT BANKRUPT
IN ONE YEAR.

DON'T TELL THE NEW OWNERS. YOU SEE WHERE KENTUCKY OFFERED A PLAYER A RACEHORSE?



A diamond didn't make our commitment. It celebrated it.



At first, I couldn't picture us as a couple. I mean, doing the "hustle" to her classical music just wasn't my style.

But then we realized being different wasn't so bad after all. It was one of the things that made being together worthwhile.

We put a lot of effort into trying to understand each other's likes and dislikes. To build a relationship; to bring it to this point.

That's why giving her a diamond didn't all of a sudden make a commitment. It celebrated one we both made a long time ago.

A diamond is forever.



To give you some idea of diamond values, the half-carat ring shown here (enlarged for detail) is worth about \$1100. Diamond values will vary according to color, clarity, cut and weight. Ask your jeweler for the free booklet, "A Diamond Is Forever," De Beers Consolidated Mines, Ltd.

#### (A SPECIAL SECTION)

## HERE'S WHAT IT'S DONE... BY ROY BLOUNT JR.

had occasion to be in the Americus, Ga., Moose Lodge not long ago when the conversation turned to economics. A man there said it had cost him, as an independent operator, \$200 more to buy a calf a year ago and raise it into a cow than it would for him to buy a raised cow today.

"It's like everythin' else," said another Moose. "Farmin'. Gas stations. Stores. The small man being driven out. Big business drivin' in. The little man can't afford to live. Hell, you can't even afford to go see a dang ballgame anymore, it costs so much."

"Unless it's on the television," the first Moose said. "And then you get to see the commissioner of baseball tryin' not to look cold under his longjohns while they play the World Series in the middle of October—at night."

"That's what you call prime time," I said. Then, emboldened to make an analogy, I added, "It's like tomatoes. Are the tomatoes you get in the supermarkets—that are bred for early picking, uniform packing and long-distance distribution—really tomatoes? No. And neither are frostball games scheduled by network television really a World Series."

I didn't have to say what the essential difference was between the real tomato, which you grow in your own garden or buy from a roadside stand, and the pithy-pulpy-encased-in-plastic, three-to-a-pack tomato you buy in your chain store. The essential difference, besides the second tomato's not having any essence, is that the former is a small-operation tomato, and the latter is a big-profit tomato.

In 1919, when baseball was a smalloperation sport, ballplayers made so little money that the game's best team could be bribed into dumping, heavyhandedly, the World Series. The next big sports scandal may come when a championship is thrown for tax reasons. I'll take the Black Sox any day.

Now, I am all for players enjoying the

fruits of their labor. No matter how much he makes, Pete Rose will still play baseball with as much motivation as the dedicated proprietor of a first-rate corner store. Professional athletes used to be pawns. In the front office, not even Joe DiMaggio got respect. The Yankees clipped him, in fact. For 1942, the year

#### "The next big sports scandal may come when a championship is thrown for tax reasons"

after he hit in 56 straight games—setting the one major-league baseball record that may never be broken—the Yankees offered him a \$5,000 cut. Jocks are now getting serious pieces of the action, and it's about time.

But the action itself has gotten out of hand, and the games and the fans are paying the price—paying more for a watered-down product. Well before players found ways of claiming big money, team owners were going for and throwing around the large, easy, inflationary dollar to bring them in more dollars. Consider:

TV revenues. Which means TV control. Have you ever noticed how eerie it feels to be sitting in a stadium, caught up in a tense game, when for no observable reason time is called? Everyone is just standing there on the field, waiting. Everyone is just sitting there in the stands, waiting. Everyone is waiting while the event's principal audience is being told that their lives will be enriched if they buy some of those delightful synthesized tomatoes. It is as though actual life is not at hand, but is being conducted on some ethereal level, being suspended and then resumed by unknown forces for reasons of their own. It is as if you were making love to a

woman and all of a sudden she looked over your shoulder and asked, "How was that, guys?" And when you turned around yourself, you couldn't see anybody.

But TV not only interferes with sports events. It interferes with sports wheeling and dealing. The networks sign up boxers and, colluding with matchmakers, control when and where they fight. The TV folks realize that even bad boxing matches can draw larger audiences than the standard sodden fare on the tube. But how many bogus bouts can fans take?

A while back I saw an interesting TV movie. That in itself was surprising enough, but this was a TV drama about sports: The Deadliest Season, about how the money men behind hockey encourage players to de-emphasize their hockey skills in favor of beating each other's brains out, so as to attract the hockey "fan" who admires violence.

Hey, I thought, that is pretty strong stuff. I wonder why TV has never done anything like this on football. Then it hit me: TV doesn't need hockey. TV can't get good ratings from hockey, so TV feels free to get high-minded about hockey. Of course, TV got around to doing this story during a season in which the NHL has effectively reduced bloodspilling and spleen-spearing. Typical of TV: Telling it like it isn't.

Expansion. This is a clever way of watering a league's stock. Issue new franchises for big money. A certain amount of expansion made sense. But now there are so many so-called big-league teams that even serious fans can hardly keep track of all the teams—much less all the players.

Formation of new leagues. This creates a great upsurge in paper assets and bad debts. When the World Hockey Association's Denver Spurs, formerly the Chicago Cougars, literally sneaked out of Denver one evening on their way to becoming the Ottawa Civics, WHA executive vice president Bill Putnam said,

### HERE'S WHAT IT'S DONE...

CONTINUED

by way of extenuation: "I'm tired of hearing all about a trail of debts. It's better than a pile of debts."

Quick-buck entrepreneurs throw together a new league the way other such types whip up a land-boom bubble based on quicksand acres. Overnight sports tycoons woo star players away from established leagues by offering them enormous sums of money. The players' agents collect their shares of these contracts. The players themselves may never realize much, since the franchise or the league is likely to go under after the founders make a bundle, but salary scales are escalated unrealistically, and so are ticket prices. The fans pay the price.

Extension of schedules. As I understand it, in our economy a business considers that it is being shortchangedand therefore is entitled to raise its prices and cheapen its product-unless its profits are increasing by a suitably higher percentage than they increased last year. But sports operators have a fiscal advantage over, say, directors of steel companies. If annual revenues aren't up sufficiently, a league may add a couple more weeks to its season or playoff schedule. Thus we have the opening of football season competing with the World Series, and the opening of baseball season competing with the basketball and hockey playoffs. In basketball and hockey nothing really counts much until the playoffs, which feature weary, beat-up players and which seem to last as long as seasons

Superism. Super week, which once in 11 Super Bowls has culminated in a good football game. Superstar competitions, which sell real estate and prove that Kyle Rote Jr. can ride a bicycle better than Mean Joe Greene. The institutionalizing of the superstar concept, which requires every ambitious player to strut, pout and invent nicknames for himself whether he has any gift for that kind of thing or not. At least one golf or tennis or boxing spectacularto-end-all-spectaculars-because-somuch-money-is-involved every weekend. Mammoth multipurpose sports complexes, which also house rock concerts, boutiques, and the offices of promoters who before the first ticket is sold are already sweating out how they can shift more of the burden onto taxpayers (including, of course, your basic fan) so as to stave off bankruptcy.

Amateurism. This may be the biggest shuck of all. Amateurism is not consid-

ered a virtue in any other career pursuit—acting, writing, entertaining, politics, medicine. Why should it be in athletics? In order to keep themselves going, most NCAA or AAU athletes have to take money, lots of money, under the table. Some day an amateur runner is going to sue for the right to take money openly from shoe manufacturers, or a college football player is going to sue for the right to accept an honest cut of the enormous revenues he helps bring in. If I were the judge, these suits would be successful.

Everybody huffs and wails over ille-

"Young athletes are taught that, if they don't get nabbed, it's plumb swell to cheat"

gal recruiting practices, and to be sure these practices may well be rampantas might be expected when you realize that the NCAA's enforcement arm, charged with keeping over 700 schools in the country aboveboard, consists of eight (count 'em: 8) investigators. But the fact is that most people who put up with the grind of playing big-time sports do so in order, eventually, to improve their economic lot. Rich kids play lawschool intramurals. There's no reason why college players shouldn't draw salaries-not necessarily the great sums that lure their coaches into breaking contracts, but honest wages. There is no reason why they shouldn't be offered open, taxable bonuses for signing with the school of their choice. Under the present rules, too many of our young athletes are taught that, as long as they don't get nabbed, it is plumb swell to cheat.

Who does it benefit when a young athlete loses a year of eligibility for accepting too much laundry money, or has to miss a meet because he runs afoul of some nonsensical rule laid down by some supposedly "governing" body? It benefits nobody but the old buggers who get senses of power and trips abroad out of their supposed contributions to amateurism. People who can afford to, or whose sports don't bring in great revenues, can still play amateur sports, but there's no reason why people who bust their asses for four years in college, hoping to make big money later on, should

finish with nothing to show for it but non-negotiable transcripts and bad knees.

What is needed now is not better-policed quasi-amateurism but responsible, uninflated professionalism. And if the Olympics can't make room for American-style sports professionals, as it has made room for other countries' pros, then let the Olympics try to get along without American TV revenues and expertise just once. (Incidentally, it costs between \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000 each Olympiad just to test the sex of the athletes.)

Legal fees. In his '76 Super Bowl press conference Pete Rozelle said that the NFL had paid \$3.8 million to lawyers during '75. In '76, he said recently, legal expenses went up to \$4.4 million, not counting what the league's management council paid lawyers in its negotiations with the Players Association. A great portion of that expense went toward preserving the structure of the game, that is, toward not paying players too much money.

Ironically, the lawyers who were paid all that money by the NFL lost every one of the league's landmark cases. The NFL has now agreed to pay the players \$16,000,000 to get them to forego lawsuits for the next five years. The teams, of course, chip in to make that \$16,000,000 payment. And the New York Giants (who now play in New Jersey) immediately offered season-ticket holders who sent in their checks earlythe Giants presumably being a tad shy of petty cash to meet their payment to the NFL-three free preseason tickets. The players and fans both finally won one there. But the victory for fans was only a pre-season win. The price of tickets for the regular season is going up all around the league.

Money is like government, or urban development. When it goes beyond human scale, it ceases to become a means of satisfying people's needs and settling their differences, and becomes a monster covered with leeches. It may take a general collapse of the sports economy to put sports back into perspective. Professional hockey has become such a financial shambles that the players are beginning to assume positions of responsibility abdicated by squabbling owners. "All our salaries must come down," says Philadelphia's Bobby Clarke, the president of the NHL Players Association. "It's crazy. The game and its integrity are more important than what one person wants.'

The integrity of a game is its savor. When sports, like tomatoes, loses its savor, healthy appetites can't be satisfied, because the only taste then left in your mouth is that of greed.

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SP-67

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#### A SPECIAL SECTION

After almost 20 years as an NBA player and general manager, a proud and saddened Wayne Embry says,

### "The Owners Are Destroying the Game"

An Interview BY JOHN DEVANEY

ook at it," Wayne Embry said, spinning a basketball between his huge hands, "Look at it. Once this provided a lot of fun, and a lot of good things came out of this game. But now it's a multi-million-dollar business. And some of the owners, out of ignorance, have taken basketball away from the players and the people who know the game . . . and those owners are destroying it."

Wayne, who was sitting on a bed in his hotel room, gestured toward a tape recorder that was turned on beside him. "We've been talking about the greed and the cheating that's going on in basketball. You're talking to me because sports operates in a fishbowl and people are curious about big-name athletes and the things I've told you about them. But pro sports is only a segment of our society. And this is a society that teaches us to win at any cost. We throw roses at the winners and stones at the losers. So what's going on in basketball-win at any cost-isn't any different from what's going on in any other big busi-

He shrugged sadly and reclined his six-foot-eight, 270-pound frame on the bed. Having been in the National Basketball Association for almost 20 years-as a player with the Cincinnati Royals, Boston Celtics and Milwaukee Bucks, and as general manager of the Bucks-Embry has seen the league grow from a kind of small family grocery into a giant supermarket chain. I asked Wayne to go back to 1966 when, though the game was still fun for him, he considered quitting in the interest of his longrange future.

That spring I had decided to retire even though I was only 29 and had been an All-Star center the previous season. I had taken a marketing job with Pepsi-Cola. Then Bill Russell became the Celtics' coach, and he asked me to be his backup center. I was tempted: This was a chance to win my first NBA championship. I signed a two-year contract at \$25,000 a year. I'd been an All-Star for



**Wayne Embry** 

five years with Cincinnati, and the most I'd ever made was \$17,500.

'I came to camp weighing 285. Before our first practice someone hid Russell's sneakers. He came out barefooted and in that arrogant manner he had, he put us through two and a half hours in which we never touched a basketball. We ran wind sprints, we did exercises, we ran more wind sprints. There was a puddle of water around where I was. I felt like I was dying. When we finished I weighed 257. We wanted to skull the guy who hid Russell's sneakers.

"That year Philadelphia won the championship. I think we had a better team-K.C. and Sam Jones, Bailey Howell and Satch Sanders, with John Havlicek the sixth man. Russell was a proud man and he wanted no coaching assistance from the veterans. He wanted to prove he could coach. But he played a lot and it was difficult for him to see who was tired and all the other things a coach has to see. He was a better player that year than he was a coach.

'At practices he'd sit on the sideline sipping coffee and eating doughnuts while we went at it. If your man was scoring on you, or if it got physical, he'd say, 'You going to let him beat you like that?' Within minutes there'd be a fight.

"I don't think he wanted to go oneon-one against me. In pre-season intrasquad games, I beat the hell out of him. I was too much for him physically and I'd get 25, 30 points a game. I told him, 'I'm going to take your job, Russell.' 'No you won't,' he'd say with that cackling laugh, 'because I'm the coach.'

"Russell's blocked shots and rebounds are his only outstanding statistics. But he was unique. He could be effective just by showing up. The arrogant way he played, he intimidated other players. I always thought he intimidated Chamberlain.

'The following season-1967-68we won the championship. In the semifinals we were down three games to one to the Philadelphia 76ers—and the next game was in Philadelphia. But Celtic pride was a real thing. We won the next three games to beat the 76ers and then we beat the Lakers for the title."

At season's end, Embry went to the Bucks in the expansion draft, retired after one year, and later became assistant to the president of the team. In 1972 he was named general manager of the Bucks, the first black to hold that job in the NBA, and he immediately faced a

major problem.

In the 1972 draft that spring, we had two first-round picks. I used one of them to draft Julius Erving. Someone on our board of directors said to me, 'Who's Julius Erving? No one's ever heard of him.' I said he'd whipped my ass in oneon-one a few years earlier at a basketball camp in upstate New York. He was a high school senior then, and I kept track of his career after that. He left the University of Massachusetts in his junior year to play for Virginia in the ABA. By NBA rules he couldn't be drafted until his class graduated, which was that

"As usual, the drafting was done by a conference phone call. When it was over I felt pretty good. I was having a

### The Owners

few beers with [coach] Larry Costello and some newspapermen when I was called to the phone. A reporter for the Long Island *Press* asked if I had any comment concerning the Atlanta Hawks' signing of Julius Erving.

"I was shocked. I said they couldn't sign him because we had just drafted him. He told me the Hawks said they signed him prior to the draft.

'That night I called Richie Guerin [then the Atlanta GM] and asked, 'What the hell are you doing?" He said it was the same thing as the Spencer Haywood situation, when Seattle had signed him from the ABA's Denver team. I said, 'Bullshit,' and we got into a shouting match over the phone. Richie and I were close-we still are-but I was to learn that Richie had to do what everyone has to do-win at any cost. It's like what I heard recently about a college coach who was asked how he could recruit young men by offering them illegal deals. And he said, 'I got to. If I don't win, I'm out on the street.

"I called commissioner Walter Kennedy and told him Atlanta's signing of Erving violated the constitution and the bylaws of the league, the fabric that had held the NBA together.

"Kennedy was a good man who tried to preserve the integrity of the league. But he was facing a new breed of owners, relentless businessmen like Paul Snyder in Buffalo and Sam Schulman in Seattle, who could get vicious. It became more and more difficult for Walter to make them obey the league's bylaws. Anyway, it's the NBA board of governors, which is made up of a group of owners, that really decides what goes on and who gets what in the league, not the commissioner.

"The board of governors ruled that Julius belonged to the Bucks. The Hawks were fined \$25,000 a game for playing Julius in two pre-season games. But their interference had temporarily muddled his NBA status and he decided to stay in the ABA, signing a long-term contract with the Nets.

"We kept asking the board of governors for damages, but somehow we could never get the subject on the agenda.

"In those meetings I saw all the politics and all the greed in the NBA. The bylaws meant nothing to some of the owners. They lined up behind Atlanta, which maintained it hadn't done anything wrong, because they didn't want the Doctor, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Oscar Robertson on the same team. It

would have destroyed the competitive balance in our division, and some members of the board also wanted the Doctor in another city where he would draw more people. Greed won out over the bylaws.

"Finally, in 1974, the board awarded us two second-round picks and \$150,000 from Atlanta. It wasn't anything close to what Julius Erving had become worth. We felt we should have gotten the first-round pick we'd lost."

Around the same time, Embry had another serious problem.

"I began getting calls from people in the community saying one of our players was involved in drug transactions.

#### "Kennedy was facing a new breed of owners, relentless businessmen who could get vicious"

That was hearsay, but then federal agents and policemen warned us about the company this player was keeping.

"I tried not to interfere with the personal lives of the players, but the coaches were concerned about these allegations and so was I. Drug users are a problem in sports today and, from what I have been told by players, they can be found on more than one ball club. We were worried. In a community like Milwaukee, something like this could destroy the franchise.

"And I was concerned about the player's health and his career. He was acting strangely. At times he would throw a shot so hard that the ball would zoom off the glass and start a fast break at the other end. At a meeting during practice, he'd sometimes jump up and run a lap around the gym for no reason.

"I tried to pull his coat, to let him know what was being said about him before he ruined his career. I called him in twice. He denied everything. We didn't want to do anything to him without more evidence. But the newspaper speculation was mounting. It was becoming another Watergate.

"Finally, we decided to hire private eyes to watch this player on a trip to Los Angeles, so we could get some evidence to confront him with. They found some powder in his room, took it to a drug analyst in Los Angeles, and he determined it was cocaine. We called the player in and it was decided there would be a settlement of his contract and he would go. He went to an ABA team, then returned to the NBA briefly in 1975."

After the 1974 playoffs-in which the

Bucks lost the seventh game of the finals to the Celtics—Oscar Robertson blasted the Bucks and retired. I asked Wayne what happened.

"In that series Oscar began to show his age. Our other starting guard, Lucius Allen, was injured, and Boston's pressure defense bothered our guards in bringing the ball across the ten-second line. So the burden was placed on Oscar to bring the ball across. That was what the Celtics wanted. They had seen in films that after Oscar gave up the ball he dragged behind. They could leave him alone and double-team someone else.

"The day after the seventh game I said to Oscar: 'You have publicly announced you are going to retire. If you really are going to retire, I'd like to know because there is an expansion draft coming up [New Orleans had joined the league] and we have to decide who we will protect. If you are not going to retire, we have to protect you because you have a no-trade contract.' Oscar's reply was, 'Well, I don't know, big fellow, I'll let you know later.'

"Oscar and I were close. We had been roommates on the Cincinnati Royals. Our wives socialized. I called him that night and I said, 'Oscar, it would really help if you'd let us know now.'

"He still wouldn't give us a reply. So we had to protect him. And not knowing if he was going to retire, we had to protect our other guards. We exposed a forward. Curtis Perry, and lost him.

"Then came the college draft. Still uncertain about Oscar, we drafted a guard. And we signed another from the ABA. In July we faced a deadline. We had to tender a contract to Oscar by July 31 or he was a free agent. We had several meetings with the board of directors and we discussed Oscar's age—he would soon be 36—and his salary—about a quarter of a million dollars a year. The decision was made not to tender him a contract. Oscar had the option of trying out for the Bucks, or any other team, but maybe Oscar didn't want to be in the position of trying out. He retired.

"I think Oscar was the best player in the history of basketball. It was hard for him to accept anyone who was not up to his level as a player. So all through his career he would be critical of other players, even teammates. Hell, he was even critical of Jabbar, saying Kareem didn't get enough rebounds. Oscar had a chipon-the-shoulder attitude toward management and he was critical of all coaches. He has ripped everyone he ever played for, including me, but I figure why should I be any different?

"After he retired I learned from mutual friends that Oscar was angry with me. I told mutual friends that a business decision should not interfere with a per-



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### The Owners

sonal friendship and if it did, then the personal friendship couldn't have been that deep. We aren't close anymore.

"But I could understand Oscar's feelings. All players think they can still play. And a quarter of a million dollars is a large sum to have taken away from you. I thought Oscar was smart enough and strong enough to have played one more year. But this is a business, not a sport anymore, and when management looks to the end of the season and hopes it finishes in the black, a quarter of a million dollars is a very significant sum."

The next season the Bucks also lost the superstar from their 1970-71 championship team when they were forced to trade Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

"In October of 1974 Kareem asked Wes Pavalon, the chairman of the board, Bill Alverson, our president, and me to have a dinner meeting with himself and Sam Gilbert, a Los Angeles businessman who advises Kareem. At the dinner, Kareem announced that he was unhappy in Milwaukee and wanted to be traded at the end of the season. If he wasn't traded, he said he would sit out a year and we would get nothing.

"The next day I talked to Sam. Sam said Kareem was lonely in Milwaukee. I said, 'Hell, he can't be too lonely—I see him with good-looking friends.'

"Our board of directors was divided on what to do about Kareem. Some felt that we could talk him out of leaving by giving him more tender loving care. One sent him an expensive backgammon set. Someone said Kareem was interested in Oriental rugs and an effort was made to set him up in the rug business in Milwaukee. Someone else said that Kareem had always envisioned owning a brownstone house in New York City. One of the board members flew with Sam Gilbert to New York to look at brownstones.

"I asked Kareem: 'Are you unhappy with me or the coach? If you are, we can be replaced. You can't. You're the franchise.' He said he wasn't unhappy with me or Larry. He just wanted out of Milwaukee. I believed him because I respect Kareem. He is his own man and there is a lot of substance to him.

"Then, in March of 1974, the story was broken by a New York broadcaster that Kareem felt 'culturally deprived' in Milwaukee and wanted to be traded. Before our position got any weaker, we wanted to negotiate a trade. Kareem had told us he would go, in order of preference, to only these NBA teams—New

York, Washington, Los Angeles or Golden State.

"The Knicks initially offered us a million and a half dollars, but that wasn't near what Kareem was worth and we said no. Anyway, we had decided to rebuild, which meant going to youth.

"Washington had young players. But Kareem decided he wouldn't go to Washington after all. I remember thinking that Bill Russell never liked Boston, but he stayed there during his career, then got out. And he wasn't making the \$400,000 a year that Kareem was making. But that kind of loyalty to a team and its fans is gone now. The owners have made this a business where loyalty doesn't count, so why shouldn't the players get all they can get?

"I had several talks with Pete Newell, general manager of the Lakers. In May I flew with Alverson to Denver, where we met with Newell and Laker attorney Alan Rothenberg. They offered us Elmore Smith and Gail Goodrich. We insisted that Brian Winters be part of the deal. Then Alverson and I flew home.

"At 7:30 the next morning my phone rang. It was Alverson. Rothenberg was in Milwaukee and he wanted to talk some more. Later we learned that Jack Kent Cooke, the Laker owner, had told Alan he shouldn't come home until he had made a deal.



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"Finally we did. We got two firstround draft picks from the Lakers—
swingman Junior Bridgeman and forward David Meyers—along with center
Elmore Smith and guard Brian Winters,
plus a half a million dollars. Los Angeles
had to agree to pay a certain amount of
Elmore's salary and we set limits on
how much we would have to pay of

# "The fans pay an inflated price for a tarnished product—all because of greed"

Bridgeman's and Meyers' salaries, which hadn't been negotiated yet.

"I'd like to say this about agents: Some are legitimate—but many are flatout flesh peddlers. Many agents use the same questionable tactics to recruit clients that some college coaches use to recruit high-school players. Agents will provide money, cars, ladies and anything else while the player is in college if he agrees to let the agent represent him. Agents also have kicked back money to college coaches who advised their players to sign up with the agent. Here's an example of a deal an agent made for Elmore Smith. When Smith signed with Buffalo, his college coach at Kentucky State, Lucias Mitchell, was employed 'to render services as a scout for and consultant to' the Braves for \$250,000.

"After Elmore was traded to the Lakers, a second agent offered to renegotiate the contract. He couldn't. Instead he got Elmore to borrow money to invest in real estate 'tax shelters,' and Elmore not only lost everything, but he still owed a lot of money to the banks he'd borrowed from. The banks kept calling him. We tried to relieve the pressure by loaning him the money to pay off the banks. But the debts affected Elmore to the point where he couldn't play basketball for us any longer. We traded him to Cleveland last winter."

That trade of Smith and Gary Brokaw to Cleveland, I pointed out, angered Bob Dandridge and many Buck fans.

"What fans, writers and even players don't understand are all the reasons behind why some trades have to be made. We had to get rid of Smith and the Cavaliers wanted him, but they insisted on Brokaw, too. So we had to lose Brokaw to get rid of Elmore."

Wayne came back to the subject of agents. I said that they had made a lot of young men instant millionaires.

"Well, maybe. In some cases the kid is told he'll get a million dollars—but he may not be told how long it will take. A million dollars paid over 30 years—\$33,000 per year—is a hell of a lot less annually than a million dollars paid over ten years—\$100,000. That long-term payment was common a few years ago. As a result, many players are grossly underpaid by today's standards. The agent doesn't care. He gets his ten percent of the million dollars right away."

I said that some agents have blamed owners for escalating salaries.

"That's true. I have often wondered why an owner—richly successful in some other business—doesn't apply the same judgments to basketball that he has applied to become successful somewhere else. Would they pay the ridiculous salaries that they pay basketball players to their other employees?

"In basketball they want to take a short cut. By paying a million and a half dollars to someone, they think it means a championship. And more and more of them, lately, will pay these huge sums without consulting basketball men—the general manager or the head coach, who may be told little or nothing about a trade until it's been made.

"I told one of those rich owners that a basketball decision should be made by men whose profession is basketball. No, he said, basketball men are not businessmen. That, of course, is the old stereotype: A jock is a jock. But a jock is not an entrepreneur who, in some cases, has used underhanded methods of dealing to achieve his success, the way some owners are doing in the NBA today.

"These men have no regard for the chemistry that must exist between players if you are to win. Some players are not going to win for you, no matter how great their personal skills, because when the ball gets to them, it stops right there. But basketball is—a team game.

"Some of the owners are in the game just for a personal thrill or need for notoriety. They like to be around athletes. They are jock sniffers who enjoy synthetic relationships with stars.

"I have heard of an owner who says that if he puts up the money for a team, he has the right to be the coach and general manager. That kind trades people like they were so many bubblegum cards. But, of course, ballplayers are not bubblegum cards. They are human beings. And, frankly, I don't think that anyone has the right to own another human being. To me it's slavery—admittedly, slavery with compensation, but nonetheless slavery.

"When these owners don't win a championship ring they can show to their country club friends, they say, 'I spent the money, so it must be the players' fault or the coach's fault.' Pressures build on the players and the coaches:

Win or you're out on the street. That makes for bad scenes in the club-house—players and coaches looking out for number one.

"Many players are now more concerned about protecting their earning power than about performing. So the quality of basketball is not what it used to be. The fans pay an inflated price for a tarnished product—all because of greed.

"There is less motivation to do the hard work that's required to be an NBA player. Two years ago we had a player who fought hard to win a starting job. This past season, after he had gotten a guaranteed \$125,000-a-year contract for three years, he showed no hunger, no drive. He told me he thought his play was 'adequate.' I said, 'I'm sorry to hear that, because if you think your play is adequate—we got a problem.'

"Like most of today's players, he thought there was a great demand for him. There had always been a demand for him ever since high school. I told him I would call every NBA team. 'We'll see if there is interest in you,' I said, 'because the way you're playing, I know there isn't.' Nothing worked and we cut him."

I asked Embry what was going to happen to basketball, given all this spending on superstars?

"A few teams will be able to afford superstars, and so they are going to have the best shot at winning championships. For other teams in smaller markets, the alternative will be trying to get 12 players who will play as one instead of one superstar carrying the 12. That's how Golden State won a championship in 1975. But to get 12 guys to play as one, you will have to reinstate the loyalty factor—and that's difficult."

I asked Wayne Embry about his future plans.

"Our owner, Jim Fitzgerald, feels he needs sound basketball advice to run the team. I'm relinquishing my day-to-day role as general manager, but I feel so strongly about the loyalty factor that I've consented to stay as a consulting vice-president. I just think so much of the game that I want to see good instilled in it. I'll stay and fight and continue to be outspoken and defend what sport was meant to be as opposed to the big business, dog-eat-dog mentality.

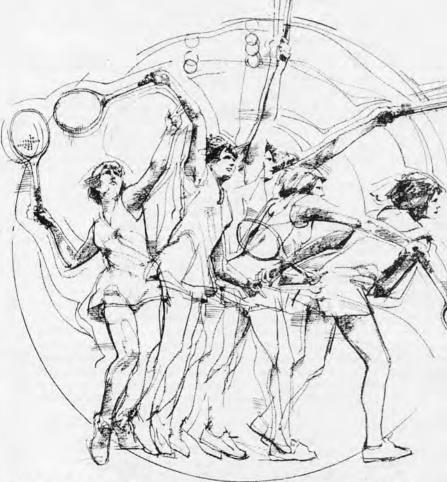
"Recently one of our directors said to me during an argument: 'I don't need basketball. I'm a success in my profession. But you need basketball.'

"I turned to him and I said, 'I don't need basketball because I have had basketball all my life. And despite what people like you are doing to this game... what I have can never be taken away from me.'

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**MAY 22** 

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**MAY 29** 

Nastase/Navratilova vs. Laver/Wade

JUNE 5

Nastase vs. Ashe

**JUNE 12** 

Goolagong/Barkervs. Navratilova/Wade

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FORD DIVISION



#### (A SPECIAL SECTION)

"When the athletes arrive at the meet, they are paid off.
In cash. Always in cash,"
says French Olympic idol Guy Drut, who ran for

### The Gold and the Money

BY HARRY STEIN

he prostitute, a sleek redhead manning her post on the fashionable Avenue Carnot, puzzles over the question. She looks to her left-toward the Arc de Triomphe-then to her right, in the direction of a busy shopping street, then back at me. She repeats the address I've asked her about. "Hey!" she exclaims, a sudden excitement flashing in her hazel eves. "Isn't that where Guy Drut lives?" She pulls her squirrel wrap tight around her and squeals in a voice shockingly reminiscent of Betty Boop's: "Oooh, I just adore Guy Drut!"

Most of France adores Guy Drut. Attractive, controversial, marvelously talented, he is, for French sports fans, a kind of Joe Namath, Reggie Jackson, Mark Spitz rolled into one. During last summer's Olympic Games, Drut (pronounced "Droo") single-handedly salvaged a measure of self-respect for this proud nation by winning its only individual gold medal, in the 110-meter high hurdles.

France's only other gold went to an equestrian team, which caused one wry Frenchman to note: "Drut was our only human to place first."

But since he ran the race, Drut's mouth has attracted far more attention than his athletic exploits. An outspoken capitalist—and a militant opponent of the Socialists and Communists who make up 50 percent of the French electorate—Drut stirred up the nation by announcing at his post-race news conference in Montreal, "I ran for half the French people."

But that remark was nothing compared to the bombshell he dropped a couple of months later. In a cover story in *Paris Match*, the Gallic version of



**Guy Drut** 

Life magazine, Drut declared that the entire "amateur" sports establishment in France and elsewhere is a sham, with athletes routinely being paid under the table by promoters (he admitted having received up to \$1,500 per meet), while those charged with regulating sports look the other way. He added that he had had enough and was turning pro.

The outcry in the French press was immediate and intense, as Drut was denounced as a loudmouth and trouble-maker. Drut had violated a fundamental code of a culture in which no one expects anyone else to be completely honest about anything, whether the subject

be love or politics or, yes, even sports.

Others speculated that Drut was merely an opportunist hoping to cash in on the controversy. In fact, just a few days prior to the appearance of the Paris Match story, Drut had signed with Mark McCormack, the high-powered sports agent who handles the business affairs of such stars as Arnold Palmer. Ilie Nastase, Bjorn Borg, Rosi Mittermaier and Drut's fellow national hero, Jean-Claude Killy. And barely two months after that, he published a ghostwritten book-one of those thin volumes with large type, wide margins and plenty of blank pages between chapters-which focused on the controversy. Its title: L'or et L'argent, which in French can be taken to mean either The Gold and the Silver (Drut won a silver medal in the Munich Olympics) or The Gold and the Money. Clearly, he was not one of those men of principle who was about to sacrifice himself to expose the hypocrisy of "amateur" athletics.

Drut, of course, insists that his motives were pure. "It's true that I want to make money," he says, "that I want to be known as *Monsieur* Guy Drut. But I insist that others recognize also that I have ethics. I'm not just a hurdler; I have a head as well as a pair of legs."

The prostitute's directions have proven flawless, and I am with Drut in the large, fashionably hip apartment he shares with his wife Brigitte. He is just back from a business meeting in a town two hours from Paris, and has changed his gray suit for jeans, a UCLA sweat-shirt and sneakers. Now he takes a seat on the floor and pours himself un ballon de rouge, a glass of red wine. He ap-

#### Gold and Money

pears even younger than his 27 years, his bright-green eyes, long, light curly hair and open, earnest expression lending him an air of innocence. But that disappears when he talks-in rapid French or, occasionally, in heavily accented English—for he is as smooth as a 1971 Bordeaux.

"You know," he says sincerely, "what I said about corruption was quite obvious. It's something that every athlete in track and field knows about and has participated in. I simply said that we should put these things on the table and deal with them and poof!"—he does a French imitation of an explosion—"it exploded." He shakes his head. "I really find it difficult to understand the outery."

Drut has a point. Though his so-called revelations were, in fact, neither new nor shocking to those who follow track and field, Drut's charges were certainly valid. But so, too, may be the charges of Drut's critics: that he is a man railing against commerce in sport . . . primarily because he hopes to turn himself into a commercial property.

Drut lowers his glass of wine, lights up a Gauloise and inhales deeply.

"In training?" I ask. Drut smiles. "Yeah, I really should watch myself, shouldn't I? But'-he switches to English-"it's difficult. being Guy Drut, beeznezman.

I take a sip of my wine and ask: "Are you saying every athlete knows about the illegal payoffs? They've all accepted money under the table?'

Drut gives me a sober look and says, "Naturally. There's no other way a socalled amateur athlete can operate, unless he's independently wealthy.

"Well how are the payoffs made?"

"The athlete and the meet organizer agree on a price before they get together-this helps avoid disagreements later on. Then, when the athletes arrive at the city where the meet is being held, they are paid off." He empties his wine glass and refills it. "In cash. Always in cash.

Drut sighs. "It's not a pleasant business. Usually the money is exchanged in some hotel room. Very quickly, with very little said. The athlete goes in and comes out again a minute later-with bulging pockets."

'You write in your book," I say, "that you yourself were paid about \$1,500 per meet. Is that the going rate?"

He nods. "For Olympic champions. But there are wide variations, according to the athlete's fame, the number of people he'll draw to the arena. One distance runner"-he refuses to name him-"who won two gold medals, later received \$5,000 to run in another race in which he had finished seventh in Montreal.

Drut goes on talking about the underside of "amateur" sports and I am struck by the passion he brings to the subject. Drut might well be cashing in on his celebrity, but it is clear that this man cares deeply about what big money has done to his sport. He cites the cynicism it breeds in athletes, then discusses the killing travel schedules that have hurt performances and how the hypocritical system is responsible for the declining performances of Western athletes in international competition.

"Why not let amateur athletes do commercial endorsements?" he asks. throwing out his hands, "The professionals do it-no?-and no one says their integrity is compromised. O.J. Simpson puts his signature on the Hertz thing, no? Et voila! Dwight Stones and Marty Liquori could do the same thing. Why not? Then there would be no hypocrisy."

Not surprisingly, Drut's observations have received considerable support from other athletes-and particularly. he says, from Americans, "Bill Toomey was one." he says, when I ask him to enumerate them. "He said I was 100percent right. And Jim Ryun, he congratulated me when I saw him at the Superstars. And"—he furrows his brow in concentration, but comes up dry-"there were others."

It is vitally important to Drut that Americans appreciate him. Although there is a great deal of anti-American feeling in France today, with Frenchmen in every café insisting that we are subverting their rich culture with such flimsy, flashy New World notions as the fast-food joints and ugly, faceless buildings that have made parts of Paris indistinguishable from downtown Kansas City, things like that don't bother Guy Drut. He admires our entrepreneurial drive, bemoans its absence in his own society.

'Americans are formidable," he says, "an incredible people, an amazing people. For me, for any athlete, the United States is a paradise. There's not the pettiness in the States that there is here. In France, even among athletes, there's often almost a hatred. At athletic competitions in the States, everyone says"-he slides into English-"Gooood luck. Weeen a lot of moneee. C'est fantastique!"

"Well," I mumble, "it's hard to generalize," thinking: With Guy Drut, it's always the moneee.

"And in the States," he goes on rhapsodically, "if one neighbor is making more money than another, the poor one says, 'Bravo, good work. I'm going to try and make more myself."

I defend France to a French national hero, saving, "But there are some wonderful things here, too. I mean, it's so much easier to relax in Paris, to spend a day hanging around a café. In the States everyone's always in such a hurry,

He shakes his head emphatically. "Oh, but everyone hurries here, too, The difference is one of mentality; with the French, so much time is wasted. Look at lunch. Everyone here takes two hours to eat, and then they're no good for two hours afterwards. In the States people eat a hamburger, they take a quick walk and-boom!-they're ready to go again. Fantastique!"

Drut finishes his wine, then says, "Willie Davenport, the hurdler, gave me what I consider a great, great, great compliment. He said. 'It's hard to tell whether you're the most French of all the Americans, or the most American of Frenchmen.

It's easy to see Davenport's point. Most French people are, by nature, tight, unforthcoming, difficult to know. Drut comes on like your local Allstate representative; maybe not 100-percent sincere, but giving it all he's got. He doesn't even look French-he's often taken for English or Scandinavian-and his style of dress is right off an American college campus. UCLA sweatshirts are very big in Paris this year, but the French-who pronounce the school's name "oookla" and believe it to be a clothing company-wear them like a second skin; Drut's sloppy old sweatshirt looks like the real thing.

It occurs to me that, on the small street where Drut lives, stand both the chief General Motors distributorship in France and one of the best English-language movie theaters in Paris. "How," I ask on a whim, "do you like American movies?"

"Oh," he says. "I love them. Detective films, westerns, all the action films. Those psychological dramas like they make here"-he grimaces-"they bore me deeply. I'll take The Towering Inferno anytime.'

It has been suggested, I point out, that with his boyish good looks, he himself might be a natural for Hollywood.

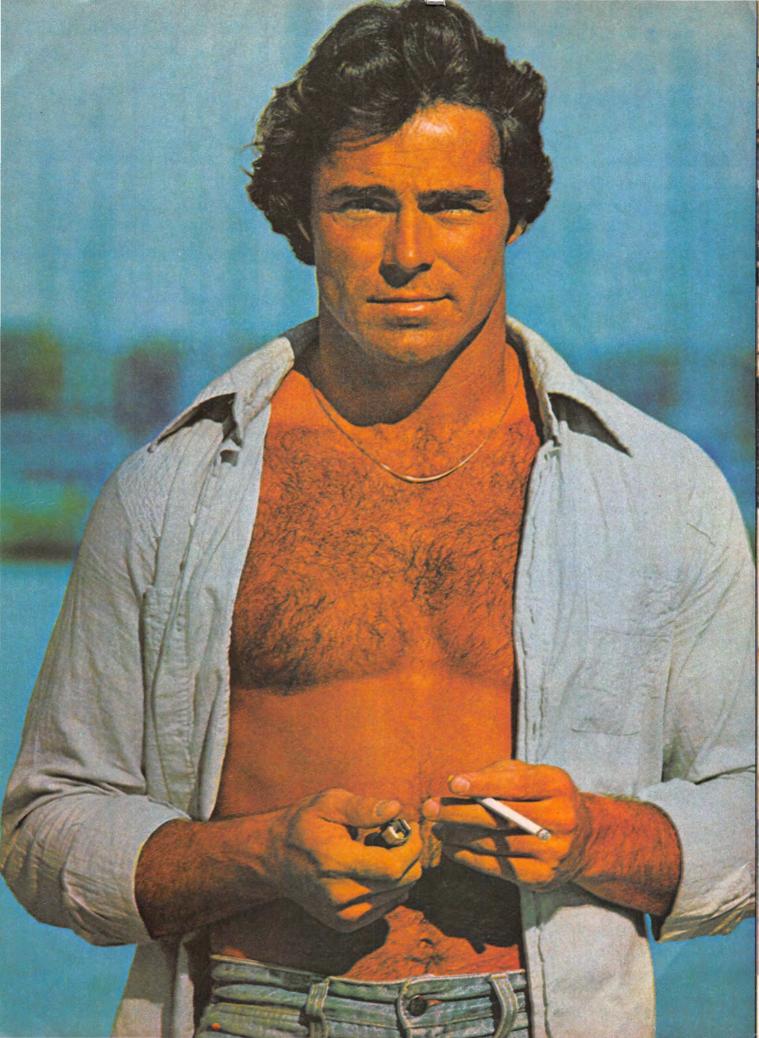
He smiles his most charming smile. "Yes, I'd like to try. But first I have to get much better known."

Drut realizes it's not going to be easy. As a track and field star, he has had little exposure outside of France-and particularly little in the States, which has a substantial crop of domestically produced world-class runners. And, with the possible exceptions of track shoes and jock straps, there's no equipment



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### Gold and Money

CONTINUED

associated with hurdling for Drut to endorse, so he can't get much exposure that way. Eric Drossart, the Swiss extennis player who is handling Guy for the McCormack organization, says, "It's going to take a lot of work to make Guy's name profitable."

Drossart plans to bring Drut along slowly, in the French and Belgian markets first, then in all of Europe, and finally in the United States. Already there is a line of shoes bearing Drut's name available in Paris, and soon there will be a line of leisure wear. "Things are," says Drut, "moving quickly."

And then there is the ABC-TV Superstars. Most athletes see this television product, in which athletes from various sports compete in neutral events, as an opportunity to relax for a few days while picking up a few thousand bucks; for Drut, the Superstars events are a cornerstone of his future. Since the Olympics, he has participated in no fewer than five Superstars competitions-including the American, French, European and World finals-and he has done very well for himself, winning two competitions, finishing near the top in all but the World finals, and picking up more than \$50,000 along the way. But just as important as the money, as far as Drut and his managers are concerned, is the immense exposure the competitions

"With the Superstars," says Drut, "I have been flying back and forth to the States all year, getting myself on American television." He smiles. "I am like a—how do you call it?—a traveling pigeon."

"A carrier pigeon?"

"That's it. But maybe someday I'll be able to stay in the States for a long time." He pours himself another wine, leans back and thinks about that. "Ah, oui, that would be fantastique."

Two days later, Guy is pursuing his new career in the studio of a high-fashion photographer. The place is out of a science-fiction flick: On blindingly white walls hang glossy shots of nudes, their bodies contorted into vaguely sinister shapes; metal stairways spiral toward an upper level; a glass-topped table, containing thousands of Ping-Pong balls, dominates the entranceway; across the room, a large parrot perches. Drut, standing in the center of the room in his gray suit, a cigarette dangling from his mouth and the sports newspaper, L'Equipe, sticking out of his jacket pocket, looks as out of place here as a box of Cracker Jacks at Maxim's.

The photographer, Jerome Ducrot, a bearded middle-aged man wearing a worn corduroy jacket, jeans and two cameras around his neck, rushes over to him. "Here, Guy," he says, "have a glass of wine." Jerome leads him to a mod sofa where a young, sexy editor for Vogue Hommes, a French men's fashion magazine, is animatedly recounting her recent trip to the Americas to a young journalist who looks incredibly bored. "Caracas," she is saying, "is formidable. So is Los Angeles. And Peru? Absolument formidable."

Drut wanders over to me. "It's a long way," he whispers, "from the hurdles to here."

Of course, it is a journey no one forced on Drut, who is here to model two lines of leisure wear for *Vogue Hommes*, an early step in his drive to achieve the kind of celebrity and financial return he is after.

A moment later the editor of *Vogue Hommes*, resplendent in a canary-yellow trenchcoat, sweeps into the studio, followed by his assistant, one of those girls with cheekbones above her eyes.

"All right," the editor says brusquely, glancing toward Drut, "what are we going to put him in this afternoon?" He, his assistant and Jerome examine a rackful of jackets and sweaters. Finally they hand a blue-and-white blazer to Drut, who has stripped down to his undershorts.

I notice the label in the blazer; it is red and white, with the word "MARL-BORO" emblazoned in block letters. "Hey," I say, "this looks exactly the same as a pack of Marlboro cigarettes."

"It's the same company," says Drut, putting on the blazer. "Starting January 1, cigarette companies in France were no longer allowed to make commercials, so Marlboro started this line of clothes to help keep their name before the public. I do their publicity."

He pulls on a pair of pants, walks back out to the studio, taking his place in front of a white backdrop. The photographer turns on a pair of harsh floodlights and starts to pose him, first this way, then that, experimenting. Not satisfied, Jerome flips on a wind machine that stands Drut's hair on end.

"Maybe something simpler would be more effective," suggests the editor.

Jerome glares at him. "You just want a routine shot? Anyone can take a routine fashion shot. If you want that, get anyone, don't get me."

The editor retreats. Jerome has his assistant switch on the stereo system—which sends loud American disco music blaring through the studio—and tells the windblown Drut to bounce to the beat. After a dozen shots, Jerome pauses. "More life!" he yells, gesturing with his

fist. Drut moves more frenetically, and the photographer resumes shooting. But a moment later he stops again, looks Drut in the eye and suddenly lets out an animal howl: "HAAA!"

Guy, dumbfounded for a moment, stares at him. Then he responds with a yell of his own: "HEEEI!"

The photographer snaps Drut in midcry. "HAAA!" he repeats.

"HEEI! HEEII!" Drut answers. Click, click.

"AARRG!"

"HEEII! HEEII! HEEIII!"

Anyone who entered the place would think he had stumbled into a kung-fu war.

I sidle over to the photographer's assistant. "What the hell is going on?"

"Jerome has used this technique before," he explains. "Since he doesn't know Guy, this is a good way to get a powerful expression out of him."

The expressions are not so much powerful as they are bizarre contortions, with Drut thrusting his head forward like an enraged rooster, his mouth twisted, his eyes ablaze, his noises more nouveau jungle: "MAAARL! HOOOH! KOAAAA!"

"More expressions!" Jerome demands.

Drut sucks in air and shouts: "SHITTTT!"

Delighted with himself, Drut looks at me and grins. But, for anyone who saw Drut's magnificent performance in Montreal, this scene is less than amusing.

When I leave the studio, I stop at a nearby café. The proprietor, an old guy in a full-length apron, takes my order, then shuffles off toward the bar.

"Hey, patron," I call after him, "what do you think of Guy Drut?" It is a question I have asked often this past week, and the replies have almost always been favorable.

But the old man doesn't answer. He pours my drink and glances out his front window. Directly opposite the café is a huge hole in the ground, until several years ago the site of Les Halles, Paris' majestic old food market. Now an underground parking lot is being built here. A score of monstrous cranes loom over the hole like a flock of prehistoric carnivores and, at this very moment, the rattle of a jackhammer competes with an Edith Piaf lament on the antique jukebox in the corner of the café.

Finally the old man shuffles back over to me. "What do I think of Drut?" he repeats. "We"—with a jerk of his thumb he indicates himself and his several customers, quietly whiling away the afternoon sipping drinks and chatting—"are what France used to be. I'm afraid that Monsieur Drut is what we are becoming."

## (A SPECIAL SECTION)

The NCAA Enforcement Department — which has a grand total of eight (8) investigators to catch the rules violators among its 700-plus member schools — should be called

# The NCAA Enforcement Sham

BY LARRY KLEIN

urrulebook is thick, and some of the rules are complex. But the basic recruiting rules are not very difficult. Essentially, it comes down to this: You can't offer anybody anything more than a scholarship before he gets there, and you can't give him anything more than a scholarship after he gets there."

-Bill Hunt, NCAA executive assistant

I worked for the National Collegiate Athletic Association from September, 1964, through July, 1972, and during those eight years the NCAA caught 62 colleges—about ten percent of its membership—breaking its rules. The 62 even included a few small colleges that broke a minor rule like playing in an uncertified bowl game.

Now aren't you ashamed for thinking

most major colleges cheat in recruiting football and basketball players?

Of course, I must confess the NCAA has never broken any records policing itself. Most of my eight years there, the NCAA had two investigators. If you think that was a joke-two guys trying to keep some 600 member colleges and universities honest-consider the fact that prior to 1966, one guy tried to do it. He was Arthur Bergstrom, a kindly gentleman who coached high-school football 20 years and then served seven years as athletic director at Bradley University before he became the NCAA's first full-time enforcement person in 1956. For the next ten years, when he wasn't busy with office paperwork and other duties, Bergstrom went out and investigated suspected rules infractions. Sometimes, one or two part-timers helped him. And once in a while, they caught a big cheater.

In 1966 the NCAA membership finally authorized the hiring of a full-time investigator, and Bergstrom selected an acquaintance's son just out of the Air Force, 25-year-old Warren Brown, a former basketball player at Kansas State. Brown did most of the NCAA's field investigating alone through 1970.

I knew that the NCAA caught few cheaters. Everybody complained about this situation, but nobody seemed to do anything about it.

One of the steadiest complainers was my father-in-law. He was in his 70s, a retired banker who loved going to all the University of Louisville home basketball games, watching every other sport on television—and baiting me. Every time we talked about recruiting, he wanted to know how I could work for the NCAA and not know that every bigtime college cheated. I would say some do; he'd say they all do, and then he'd call me naive and a few other things just short of stupid.

Tired of arguing generalities with my father-in-law, I determined to get the specifics from an expert—Walter Byers, the NCAA's executive director since 1951. One day in 1970, for the first time, I sat next to Byers on a plane trip and we even had an amiable conversation. Then I casually popped the question:

"Walter, what percent of collegesports recruiters cheat?"

Byers glared at me like a laser beam. Then he answered with all the warmth of an icicle: "No more than people in other areas of life."

See, Dad, just like I always tried to tell you. It's silly to say everyone cheats in big-time recruiting. But are NCAA investigators catching any more cheaters than they used to? And if so, how? To find out, I flew to Kansas City a couple months ago and drove out to nearby Shawnee Mission, Kan., where in 1973 the NCAA finished building its glossy, \$1.6 million headquarters. Seated in a

# The Strongest NCAA Actions: 1975

**CANISIUS: Violations:** Gave players and prospects extra transportation and summer room and board on campus. Entertained prospects and friends excessively and paid expenses of talent scouts. Also gave a player excessive aid, bought a player furniture, bought a player clothes, paid a player's car-service bill, another s phone bill. **Penalties:** Two-year probation. No TV or postseason basketball play for two years, limit of five basketball scholarships for two years.\*

**MISSISSIPPI STATE: Violations:** Offered one prospect a cash bonus for signing SEC letter of intent and then a cash payment each semester he attended. Gave prospects cash, improper transportation and entertainment and extra paid visits. **Penalties:** Two-year probation. No TV football or bowl games for two years, limit of 25 football scholarships for one year and sever all relations with three boosters.

**CLEMSON: Violations:** Offered to buy a house for a prospect's mother and to pay all the house's utility bills while the son was enrolled. Offered to buy a prospect a new car, furniture for his home and give his father substantial cash. Gave a prospect cash and offered him a substantial cash payment and additional cash each month of attendance. Gave a prospect and his friends cash at least six times on recruiting visits. Also conducted tryouts. **Penalties:** Three-year probation. No TV or postseason basketball play for three years, limit of two basketball scholarships for one year and three scholarships the next year and sever all relations with certain boosters.

\*Normal limit on scholarships allowed per year is six in basketball, 30 in football.

huge, sunny office with enormous floorto-ceiling windows, and presiding over a staff that had roughly tripled since 1972 to 61 people, Walter Byers sported longer and whiter sideburns, but at 55 he looked just as short and sturdy and strong as ever. No longer an NCAA employee, I boldly asked:

"Walter, what percent of collegesports recruiters cheat?"

No laser beam this time. Not even an icicle. The man was at peace with the world. "I can't speculate," he said "on what that percent is." He also said, "You have to start with the premise that the membership is not going to finance an enforcement program unless they feel there are sufficient violations going on."

The NCAA had two lonely investigators in early 1972, when the membership apparently sniffed sin in the air. They promptly doubled the investigative staff, which helped catch a few big-name violators, and suddenly the membership launched a longneeded crusade. They stiffened the penalties that the Committee on Infractions could impose and voted more funds to hire still more investigators. By the spring of '77, the NCAA enforcement staff had grown to 15 people: Assistant executive director Warren Brown, executive assistants Dave Berst and Bill Hunt, four secretaries and eight fulltime field investigators.

This enlarged staff is obviously an improvement, but to stop such hard-core crime as the procurement of the best athletic bodies money can buy, the NCAA—now grown to 717 member colleges and universities—will need more than eight field investigators.

"We need eight in Texas," said University of Texas athletic director and just-retired football coach Darrell Royal. He laughed. "That's kind of facetious. But it's kind of foolish to think that eight can cover the nation." Royal, a recent past president of the American Football Coaches Association, should know.

"They ought to triple the eight," said Abe Lemons, a recent past president of the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

"You mean things are that much worse?" I asked Lemons.

"All you have to do," Lemons said, "is listen when the coaches sit around and talk. You'll hear stories that'll curl your hair. Some may sound farfetched but I believe them. We've had so many kids pulled away from us at the last moment. In most cases they were being paid. You're recruiting a kid who lives in a shack with 12 brothers and sisters, and the next thing you know, he's driving a new car and wearing the latest Ital-

ian knits and carrying a pocketful of money and flying back and forth like an aviator. That kind of makes me suspicious."

For 22 years, as coach at Oklahoma City, Pan American and now Texas, Lemons has been one of the wittiest men in college basketball, but his smile fades fast when he talks about how big money has changed the recruiting game. "One of the first things I say to a kid now is, 'If you got your hand out, tell me now and we'll both save a lot of time.' You tell them what the full scholarship is, and you'd be surprised how many players ask, 'Is that all?' They tell you what they want. Money is always popular. Clothes, \$200 watches, cars. Vans are getting to be the big thing, the ones with the painted windows and the carpeting. And don't ever kid yourself. The white kids will take just as fast as the black kids. In fact, the white kids might be a little more greedy."

Okay, if many players are taking, who's giving? The same guys as before, but more of them-more coaches and more wealthy boosters or, as NCAA investigators call them, "representatives of the university's athletic interests.' Some pay prospects and players directly, others use assistant coaches as conduits or bagmen. The system works because every assistant coach, at least in basketball, wants to be a head coach, and he usually reaches his goal only after making his boss look good. A head coach who doesn't want to get his hands dirty simply tells his assistant, "Go get that kid and don't tell me how you did it." If the assistant gets caught, his boss says, "Hey, I didn't know anything about it.'

College football's coaches and boosters are reportedly pursuing their key prospects just as recklessly. "Recruit-

# The Strongest NCAA Actions: 1976

MICHIGAN STATE: Violations: Offered a prospect cash, a car, vacation transportation home, and an apartment and scholarship aid for his girlfriend. Gave other prospects improper transportation and entertainment, cash and clothes. Gave players clothes, free use of a car and helped them set up special credit accounts at a travel agency. Also failed to provide relevant materials for NCAA investigation, used an ineligible player in five games **Penalties:** Three-year probation. No TV football or bowl games for three years, limit of 20 football scholarships for one year and 25 the next, no recruiting by one coach for three years and sever all relations with two boosters.

MINNESOTA: Violations: Offered a prospect a full scholarship, apartment rent, a car, cash, free plane transportation for his parents twice a season and additional financial aid for his family when necessary. Gave prospects such gifts as cash, a salary supplement for four months, extra plane transportation, a bicycle and an engraved rod and reel. Gave players cash, plane tickets, entertainment tickets dental services, meals, long-distance phone calls, transportation for wives to tournaments, a pair of glasses, a bed and free use of cars and refrigerator. One player's parents and sister twice received free plane tickets and lodging to see home games. One player's parents, brother and girlfriend received five days free lodging. Also used four ineligibles in NCAA tournament, charged expenses on a booster's credit card, and conducted tryouts and out-of-season conditioning drills. Penalties: Three-year probation. No TV or postseason basketball play for two years, limit of three basketball scholarships for two years, no recruiting by one coach for two years and sever all relations with seven boosters.

**KENTUCKY: Violations:** Offered one prospect a racehorse and substantial cash. Offered a prospect's father diesel tractors. Gave prospects cash, betting tickets at a racetrack, dress shirts, T-shirts, jerseys and free use of a car for three weeks. Gave one player a free trip to Las Vegas, with three free days in a hotel and several cash gifts there. Gave a player drinks in a local bar for two years. Gave a player an apartment. Gave others movie admissions, meals, auto repair and \$5 and \$10 bonuses for such things as recovering a fumble, making a key tackle or directing a touchdown drive. Also provided improper transportation and improper entertainment, and conducted out-of-season football practices and conditioning programs. **Penalties:** Two-year probation. No TV football or bowl games for one year and limit of 25 football scholarships for one year. Basketball scholarships limited to three for two years.

## **NCAA** Sham

CONTINUED

ing violations are going to kill college football if we don't do something about it," says Frank Broyles, the University of Arkansas athletic director who just retired as football coach. Like Darrell Royal, Broyles is a former AFCA president.

Why do cheaters pass money so freely? Because they want to win—and make more money. Fans don't flock to see losers, and most big colleges have more seats to fill these days. An NCAA survey shows that in the last ten years, 82 colleges have built new basketball arenas, 39 of them seating more than 10,000. In football over the last decade, the ten-team Southeastern Conference has increased its total seating capacity 15 percent, the Big Eight Conference 21 percent.

Filling seats is fine, but today's teams are shooting for the giant jackpots: The bowl games in football, the NCAA Championship tournament in basketball and the fantastic television exposure in both sports, which not only aids recruiting, but brings in enormous revenues.

Take football on television: Last fall ABC-TV paid more than \$17 million to NCAA member colleges for the rights to televise 13 national and 28 regional games. That covered only the regular season. Each team appearing on a national telecast collected \$250,769. A regional appearance earned each team \$190,000. Three universities (Ohio State, Texas and UCLA) each appeared on one regional and two national telecasts for a take of \$691,538 apiece.

Football's four biggest bowls—the Rose, Orange, Cotton and Sugar—pay around \$1,000,000 a team.

College basketball is catching up fast. Take the NCAA Championship tournament. Teams earned \$4,350 each for playing a first-round game in 1966, and tournament winner Texas Western earned \$26,102. In 1976 a first-round game alone earned each team \$23,943; the four teams reaching the semifinals earned \$143,657 apiece. This year's figures soared to about \$40,000 and \$200,000 because NBC-TV paid \$4 million for tournament television rights.

NBC and TVS Television Network also gave college basketball more exposure this year, televising 88 regular-season games from January to March. "Some teams," said Lemons, "were on TV more than Sanford and Son."

As the pots of gold grow, do many college people try to win them by cheating? I asked the question of others at NCAA headquarters. But the building itself

should have been a warning. It seemed to be almost all windows, dozens and dozens of huge windows—all tinted so that on sunny days NCAA people can see out but outsiders can't see in.

"I don't think college people are cheating as much as rumors would have it," said Tom Hansen, NCAA assistant executive director in charge of such areas as television, statistics and public relations. "I think a lot of the rumors start because no one will admit he's a failure. Take an assistant coach who's been out on the road recruiting for months. Let's say he has bad luck and loses all five top prospects for different—but honest—reasons. He's got to say something to the head coach. So he complains that State U. and Tech made illegal offers."

Hansen also believes that teams at the top cheat less than teams trying to scramble up there. "The successful program," he said, "automatically attracts a successful athlete without offering him anything other than the continued prospect of success."

The man who runs the NCAA enforcement department, Warren Brown, said, "If you have a winning tradition in football and your stadium is filled, and you go to bowls and get on television, there'd be more of a disadvantage to cheat. That's why you don't see a lot of big-name institutions being penalized."

The biggest-name exception is the University of Oklahoma, which has received three NCAA "penalties" for football. After finding the Sooners guilty of "improper inducements, improper aid and fringe benefits" in April, 1955, the NCAA put Oklahoma on two years' probation-which meant only that the university was being "watched," but was in no way restricted. Eight months later, Oklahoma won its 30th consecutive football game and proved its No. I poll rating by beating third-ranked Maryland in the Orange Bowl. The Sooners then won 30 of their next 32 games (including two in Orange Bowls) before crashing to a 7-3 record in 1959.

On January 6, 1960, after finding university boosters guilty of operating a secret football recruiting fund and withholding information about it, the NCAA put Oklahoma on "indefinite" probation. That ended January 9, 1961. Over the next 12 seasons, Oklahoma played in seven nationally televised bowl games and appeared 20 more times (12 nationally) on the NCAA's regular-season telecasts.

In September, 1973, the NCAA announced it had found Oklahoma guilty of 14 violations, including falsifying a football prospect's transcript and offering a football prospect a wardrobe. This

time, the NCAA put Oklahoma on probation and prohibited its football teams from playing in NCAA TV games and bowl games for two years. The penalties did no damage. Oklahoma has since won two bowl games and appeared on two national telecasts during the 1976 season.

The teams penalized most recently, however, do confirm Brown's and Hansen's theories. Between September, 1975, and March, 1977, the five biggestname conference members caught and penalized by the NCAA were Michigan State and Minnesota of the Big Ten, Mississippi State and Kentucky of the Southeastern Conference, and Clemson of the Atlantic Coast Conference. Each team had fallen far behind the conference leaders in the sport in which it got caught.

In football, for example, Michigan State's last bowl appearance was made by its 1965 team. The frustrations dug much deeper at Mississippi State. It had made only one bowl appearance in 28 years, while conference rivals Mississippi and Alabama had each made 18 appearances. Finally, when the 1974 season ended, Mississippi State made the Sun Bowl—and the NCAA penalty list.

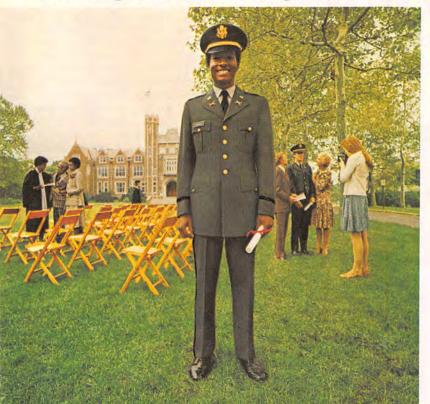
In basketball, every ACC member except Virginia and Clemson had reached the NCAA tournament between 1962 and 1973. Over a longer period, every Big Ten member except Northwestern and Minnesota had reached the NCAA tournament. Minnesota finally made it in 1972—with four ineligible players, the NCAA later announced.

Last December, Kentucky got penalized for both basketball and football violations. Though representing the SEC almost every year in the NCAA basketball tournament, Kentucky had not won the championship since 1958. Similarly, no Kentucky football team had gone to a bowl in 25 years.

The paperwork on the Kentucky case-interview memos, affidavits. newspaper stories, letters, photos and reams of material the university turned over after its own investigation-now stretches about 16 inches inside a locked file cabinet in the NCAA office. All the paperwork is completely confidential (as is every bit of information the NCAA has ever gathered in infractions cases), and this investigation all began by accident. "I was talking about recruiting with a young football player at another institution," recalled lean, curly-haired Dave Berst, now supervisor of the investigators but then one of just four field men. "In the course of that conversation, I asked him who else recruited him. He named the schools." One was Kentucky.

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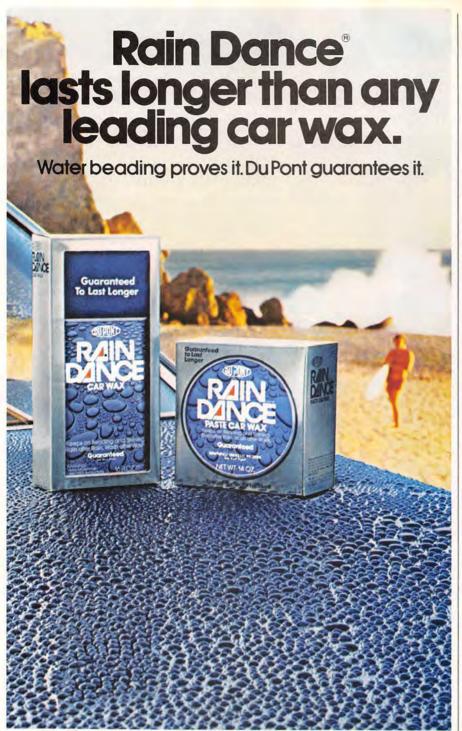
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## NCAA Sham

CONTINUED

That was in 1974. Berst continued with his original investigation and simply filed the Kentucky information in another folder, where it sat until January, 1975. "Then we decided to take a hard look at Kentucky," said Berst. "Another investigator, Jim Delany, did most of the work. It took about a year."

Because the enforcement department works for all of them, the NCAA member colleges approve the investigative procedure. First, the school is sent a letter of preliminary inquiry notifying it that the NCAA is checking allegations that have been received. If this preliminary check yields enough evidence, Brown sends a letter of official inquiry. This details the allegations and requests the college to answer them while the NCAA conducts its investigation.

Kentucky began its own investigation much earlier than most schools do, according to Berst, who says, "Their president, Otis Singletary, was very helpful. Two lawyers on their teaching staff investigated thoroughly and turned all that information over to us. A lot of what they found was reflected in the violations."

The NCAA members should stop kidding themselves. Eight investigators, none bionic, cannot cover the country. Listen to football men like Royal and Broyles, to basketball men like Lemons and Adolph Rupp. The NCAA's own basketball press kit last fall quoted Rupp on today's game: "It's a recruiting thing. It's vicious, far more vicious than it ever was when I was coaching. Of course, I was not in on the recruiting except on a rare occasion. But if onetenth of what I hear today is true, the NCAA has a problem on the recruiting in all sports. It's even getting down to baseball and track and other things. The NCAA better put on a hundred more investigators and even then I don't think they'll find out what's going on.'

Brown and his executive assistants—Berst and Bill Hunt, who handles rules interpretations, eligibility questions and legal cases—used to work hard as field investigators, and now they work hard as inside men. "Our department gets at least 50 phone calls and maybe 50 letters a day," says Brown. "All kinds of people ask questions about eligibility and rules interpretations. We turn over a lot of paper here."

A few calls start as interpretation questions but end elsewhere. As Hunt explains, "Sometimes I'll be talking to a coach and I'll ask him how recruiting is You can own a Caravelle Electrotime® for as little as \$54.95. But don't let the modest price fool you. Your Electrotime is a fine electronic instrument that never needs winding, looks wonderful on your wrist, and is precision made by Bulova to run for ages on one small cell. The styles you see here are, from left to right: 46772 for her, \$69.95. 41728 for him, \$59.95. 46769 for her, \$59.95. Suggested retail prices. © 4 Bulova Watch Co.



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caves that spot the coastline, beneath one of the boulders thrown there by the winter storms, is our treasure. It has been waiting patiently for you since August 1, 1970.





Loch Ness. Fly to Inverness and then drive the few miles to Loch Ness along General Wade's Military Road until you get to the tiny hamlet, Dores. You will be at the northeastern tip of the 24-mile Loch. There's a small inn in town where you can enjoy a Canadian Club and get a good description of the monster from the owner. He and the lady who works with him have actually sighted the beast. In back of the inn, about 250

yards straight out from the dock looking toward Tar Point and about 30 yards off the perpendicular shore to your right, we dropped a sealed, watertight case of Canadian Club.



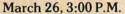
Bigfoot's feeding ground. Deep into the Cascade Mountains in America's Pacific Northwest lurks a massive 8-foot-tall, 500-pound humanoid they call Bigfoot. The buried case lies smack in the middle of his feeding ground, about the same number of miles south of Canada's Good Hope Mountain as it is north of Bluff Creek in California. Somewhere between 6 and 9 miles from the peak of a dormant volcano you'll find an unnatural pile of broken green rocks. From the top of this pile walk 65 paces east to a stream. Turn and walk 70 paces south. Exactly 11 inches below the virgin forest floor at your feet lies that case of Canadian Club.



Every year courageous men and women respond to the Canadian Club challenge and follow its invitation to new experiences in exotic places. But the flavor of those exotic places can be sipped from a glass, comfortably, at home or in the local tavern. Taste the smooth, light flavor of Canadian Club and taste the spirit of adventure.

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March 26, 3:20 P.M.

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## NCAA Sham

CONTINUED

going. If he says bad, I'll ask him why. I encourage him to report violations." Other tips come from anonymous phone calls, signed and unsigned letters and newspaper clippings. Counting duplication, the NCAA receives ten to 12 items a day concerning possible violations. The most serious are turned over to the field staff.

Every one of the NCAA's eight field investigators has been hired since 1975, at a starting salary around \$12,500. Only two had previous investigative experience: Hale McMenamin served 26 years with the FBI, and Mike Mesh worked six-and-a-half years with the Kansas City police department. Ron Stratten coached football at Portland State, Tom Yeager served as assistant athletic director at Springfield College, and the other four—Jim Delany, Brent Clark, Bob Minnix and Mike Gilleran—all earned law degrees a year or two before joining the NCAA.

"They're on the road at least 20 days out of every 30," says Brown. "It's a tough job, confronting people under adverse conditions. Some people don't like to see you coming. But we're not

trying to see how many people we can get into difficulty. Our goal is to respond as properly and efficiently as possible to the allegations and try to find out exactly what happened."

This year the NCAA has budgeted \$120,000 (compared with \$75,000 last year) for its eight investigators to travel and talk with players, prospects, parents, friends, coaches, athletic directors, boosters, bankers, car dealers, handwriting analysts and anybody anywhere who might supply information.

Berst admits that various cases have required talking with "more than 100 people." Brown says his staff is usually working on ten active cases and about 40 preliminary cases. All with eight investigators? None of whom has subpoena power. And only two of whom have previous training in the techniques of investigation, which law-enforcement officials say take years to hone. No wonder some people complain that the NCAA membership seems more interested in cosmetics than catching cheaters.

Investigating for the NCAA would be impossible for TV detective Baretta, who regularly demonstrates that the art of infiltration and deception is often the key to obtaining evidence.

"We have to be straight-forward in our approach," says Brown. "We don't misrepresent ourselves."

"We don't go through windows or back doors," says Hunt.

"We keep talking about the fact that we wear 'white hats,' " says Berst. "We have to do things properly or the enforcement department couldn't survive."

I don't envy those three enforcement department leaders. How can they and their eight investigators be expected to wear white hats yet dig up dirt in the sordid spots they sometimes visit? I mean, who would have heard of Watergate if Woodward and Bernstein had not at times used deception?

Brown, Berst and Hunt are good, strong team players who wouldn't dream of knocking the franchise owners—in this case, the NCAA membership. For example, one day Brown told me: "Having more people out lets you hear more." The next day, when I asked if his department could use a bigger budget and more investigators, Brown said, "We don't need more money now. And I think eight is the right number."

Maybe that's not fair, pulling little quotes like that out of many hours of questioning, but Brown, Berst and Hunt consistently obeyed team rule No. 1: You never, never criticize an NCAA member. And one way you avoid it is never talking about a specific infractions case. Why, they wouldn't even confirm the original thought behind this story: That their expanded staff is doing a better job of catching more and bigger-name cheaters. "I hope it's true," said Brown.

But specific cases?

Brown, age 36, (who resigned in May to enter private business), worked six years as a field investigator, but says he can't remember any specific cases being harder or easier.

Berst, age 30, pitched and played basketball at MacMurray College and then coached there before replacing Brown as a full-time field investigator in 1972. It takes some prodding, but finally Berst tells about a football coach who insisted that the pants he had bought were for himself and not for a prospect, as the prospect had alleged. Berst said, "The coach was about five-foot-ten and the pants had a 36-inch inseam [which would fit somebody about six-footthree]. The coach said his wife altered all his clothes." A funny story, but if you want names you'd better start looking for a five-foot-ten football coach or a six-foot-three prospect.

It was not until 1973 that the NCAA finally got around to issuing press releases detailing the violations found in the schools it has penalized. There have been 38 penalty cases since the summer of 1973. About 300 sportswriters around

# "All we are is a old country ball team"

At Newberry, there were no chalk-talks, no team meetings, no practices longer than 45 minutes but the Indians were the No. 1 small-college basketball team last season

### BY FRANKLIN ASHLEY

henever Ronald Hall would slam the Newberry College bass drum in the early '60s, the sparsely lighted 30-year-old MacLean Gymnasium shook with the oooooo-ooo of the Indian war cry. Ronnie Rash would dance the ersatz Indian shuffle he'd learned from the black-and-white TV. Head cheerleader Judy Kramer would scream her indignant wholesome head off. I would squeeze my girl-friend's hand extra tight. Winter ferocities. The new coach, Neild Gordon, would shield his frustrations behind an easy-wider smile.

My friend Henry Wilson (my friend even though he was a "biness" major) would shout from the stands: "Watch him, ref! Watch him! Number 22, ref! Number 22! Watch his elbows!" His face the color of a stoplight, Henry would roar at the deaf-mutes in the striped shirts. But Newberry College would, once again, go down to defeat.

As we clumped and muttered out of the red-brick gym, Henry would wonder aloud what we all wondered: "Hotawmighty! You think Gordon's ever gonna amount to anything?"

It didn't take but 14 years.

I am now back at my alma mater, which is situated in the small, hard insular South Carolina town of Newberry, to view the final game of the Indians' incredibly successful season. In fact, the Newberry record—34-0—is the longest one-season winning streak of any basketball team in college history. And naturally I stop to see my old "biness"-major friend Henry Wilson at his appropriately named bar, Henry's. A gray-and-red Newberry College pennant hangs above his speckled bar mirror.

"Hey, Frank!" he says, as we greet one another and I tell him I'm researching a story on the Indians and coach Gordon. "Want a quote from me on Newberry's basketball team?" He clears his throat as I wait with anticipation. "Neild Gordon," he intones, "is a fine

The Creamer twins, Donnie and Ronnie (No. 12), were "walk-ons" at Newberry who stayed to play and sign autographs.

coach. Now what you think of that?"

But the general reaction to Newberry basketball is typified by Little William, a 250-pounder who is still ringing the same musty, dusty cash register at Heller's Gulf Station. "It's somethin', Frank, it's really somethin'. Sure I go to see 'em. But what I want to see is a good football team. They won just half their games. You get a football team, Newberry'd be on the map!" Then he allows, "I guess old Neild did okay, though."

At 4:15 in the afternoon, I find Neild Gordon alone in the Newberry College cafeteria, his undefeated team having just departed following an early supper of round steak and gravy and pole beans. Neild's hair is still as short as it had been in 1963 when he first came to Newberry after a string of jobs at other small schools. Now 45, the six-foot-six Gordon had played at Furman University with superstar Frank Selvy in the early '50s. The Selvy-Gordon duo remains college basketball's highest scoring forward combination ever.



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## country team

During Neild's first season as Newberry coach, my senior year, the team had a 7-17 record. The next year, Newberry was 2-23. At the end of five years his teams were 40-80.

Gordon is comfortable and engaging as he recalls those early seasons, his smile a mask of teeth hiding the hurt of the hardwood frenzy.

"I went to see Dr. Wiles after my fifth year," he says at the table. "Wiles was still president. I said, 'If I can't make it next year, that'll be it.' The next year I finally had a winning season."

Now the Indians were No. 1 in the nation, ranked ahead of 534 other teams in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, which is theoretically a conglomeration of small colleges, but in practice accepts any school applying for membership. Newberry College, a remote, Lutheran institution with 850 students and nine basketball scholarships, plays some opponents with student populations of 8,000.

Taking a swig of pre-sweetened iced tea, Neild tells me that before the current season "we were picked fourth in our conference. Last year we went 30 and five, but we lost almost everyone. Then, you know some funny things happened. Four kids walked in almost from nowhere. I talked with 'em, saw 'em work out, liked what I saw, and they liked what I had to say."

He shakes his head. "Attitude, Frank. When I get a boy who wants to play, I let him run. No computers, no printouts, no chalk-talks, no team meet-

"I don't recruit stars," says coach Neild Gordon. "I go after a kid who can fit into a whole team. Basketball's a team game." ings. Just a little basketball—45 minutes a day. I keep everything as simple as I can. I have no stars. I don't recruit stars. I go after kids who can fit into a whole team. Basketball's a team game. But we were lucky those funny things happened just before this season."

The first funny thing was that Dave Hampton, an exceptional defensive guard, popped in the door of MacLean Gymnasium. A Kentucky native, Dave had spent his freshman year at Seminole Junior College in Florida. Then, while visiting a girl in town, as he explains it, "I thought I might go work out in the gym. When coach saw me, he offered me a little help, and I had heard that Neild Gordon let you play, that he never raised his voice, just let you play basketball. So I just stayed on. In junior college ball, they do anything they can to get everything out of you. They bleed you dry.

The next "funny thing" was that twins Donnie (six-foot-nine) and Ronnie Creamer (six-foot-ten) walked in the door. They had played a freshman year at Anderson Junior College in Anderson, S.C. "We wasn't even gonna try out," Ronnie says. "Another fellow that was with us wanted to, but we got into it and from the first time I met Neild Gordon, he treated me like a person, not a number." Donnie interjects: "I bet if I wanted to borrow \$500 from him right now, he'd lend it to me." Ronnie resumes: "So when the coach asked us. 'Y'all want to play some ball for me next year?' we said sure." Gordon got himself two board-jarring rebounders who love to muscle.

The fourth player in this series of "funny" incidents is playmaking guard Joe Chatman, who had completed his eligibility at Southeastern Junior College in North Carolina when his coach



called Gordon and asked if there might be room for Joe. "As it happens," says Neild, who needed a playmaking guard, "I had a space." It was Joe, a starting guard, who gave the team its philosophy: "Basketball ain't nothin' but an old thing, man. Just somethin' to do. You see what I'm sayin'? But Neild let's you think about what you're doing."

The others among what Gordon refers to as "my starting nine" are Bobby Griffin, Scott Conant, Robert Edwards, Tony Chibbaro and Scott Kleinknecht. Griffin, a forward, averaged 18 points per game while playing only 25 minutes per game. Conant, a massive six-foot-11 center, averaged 17.5 points and 15 rebounds per game or, more accurately, in just under 30 minutes a game. An NAIA All-American, Conant, a senior, played a year at Clemson before transferring to Newberry. Edwards, a guard whose 370 assists led the NAIA, and Griffin are the only members of the "starting nine" who began at Newberry.

Tonight's game is the playoff for the championship of the district. The winning team goes to the 32-team NAIA national tournament in Kansas City. I meet Neild and the team at the bus, a green-and-white vehicle, "No. 222," that belongs to the local Boy Scout troop. The players are all wearing blue jeans, and many of them have on backyard canvas sneakers. No one, including the coach, has on a tie. The college president arrives in a Jimmy Carter denim leisure suit with a "Newberry College Indians No. 1 in the Nation" T-shirt underneath.

Ronnie Creamer slides in beside me and says, "Let's go to work."

Gordon is sitting up front, his feet against the bulkhead of the bus. He looks around and casually wonders out loud: "Hey, where's Bobby and Joe?"

"They're comin', I think," Donnie answers.

"Maybe they got dates tonight," Neild says, looking at his watch. "Well—I guess we can wait a couple more minutes."

Ronnie nudges me. "Listen to him. He ain't upset. If they didn't come, we'd just go on." Bobby and Joe shuffle into the bus and we are off, as the sounds of the Captain and Tennille waft from the bus' AM radio.

On the hard seats we vibrate out of town past the old blue-and-white Zesto ice cream drive-in and into the purple twilight toward Clinton, S.C., site of the playoff game against Coastal Carolina. I ask Ronnie about their equipment.

"We don't have that much," he says.
"All the other teams have leather shoes but the guys who do here bought 'em

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with their own money."

I look out at the shadowy cows, the buckling barns. An occasional orange farmhouse light slides by the window. "All we got is good luck and the good Lord," Ronnie says. "I'm gonna tell you somethin". Without the Lord, you ain't gone win shit."

What about practices? What about the assistant coaches? "Don't have any coaches except Neild. We practice 45 minutes a day and if we win on Monday, we get Tuesday off. Also no weekend practices. Neild likes us to have our weekends."

Conant, seated across the aisle, says, "Hell, at Clemson under Tates Locke, we practiced six days a week and sometimes seven days if Locke wasn't happy. Here, it's just fun, I guess."

"All we are," Dave Hampton adds, is a old country ball team."

"Look at him," Donnie says, nodding toward Neild as the bus pulls into the Clinton parking lot. "He ain't worried. Look at him. We're 34 and oh and he ain't worried."

But he is. During the warm-up Neild tells of the problem which eats at him. "Now, Frank," he begins, "the thing is . . . I mean, these kids are 19 and 20 years old. I don't know, but each time we win it gets harder. I know this. It'd be better if we had just lost one earlier

and the streak was over with. That would be that. But see—it's hard for the fans and the press to believe it—but a lotta things are more important than basketball. I can take the disappointment, but I don't know if they can."

I watch the players go through their pregame drills with the enthusiasm of young sailors dashing off on liberty after three months at sea. Young power. Immortality. In the air forever. Neild does not have to deal with disappointment tonight. The team destroys Coastal Carolina to win its ticket to the NAIA playoffs.

The exuberant Newberry team flies to Kansas City and wins its first tournament game, over Hastings. In the next game though, the star center, Conant, tears up his knee in the first half against Central Washington. He is out for the tournament and Newberry is losing. "We've been behind before and something's always happened," Gordon tells his players at half time.

But this time, with seven seconds to play and Newberry leading by a point, something happens for the opposition as Central Washington scores to win.

The "country ball team" has had its share of luck and Lord in Newberry College's greatest season. But after the loss, the locker room is like iron. The oxygen seems to disappear. Griffin,

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## country team

Chatman, Hampton, the Creamers—all are crying. Everyone's sitting there staring at the floor. No one looks at the coach they feel they have let down.

Neild Gordon's words flash through my mind: A lotta things are more important than basketball.

Now Gordon tries to talk to his players, but the words come hard. His rubber face stretches, he tries to bring his expression under control. The players hear snatches, fragments:

All right, boys. We've-there's a buncha reporters out there . . . waitin' on you. You talked to them all season when you won . . . now you gotta face 'em when you've lost . . . and don't . . . don't be badmouthin' the other team. Thirty-six and one. We got something to remember. Just hold . . . just hold your heads up.

He couldn't say much more and it didn't matter, because that was enough for tonight.

But Neild Gordon had one more thing to tell. He waited till the next week when the rumors about his future were rising around Newberry like hot air balloons. In the basement of the gym where the team hangs it clothes on pegs because there are no lockers, the NAIA Coach-of-the-Year collects uniforms. Then he announces, in obvious discomfort, that he is to become athletic director at Winthrop College, a school in Rock Hill, S.C., with a predominately female student body. "It's not the money," Neild says. "I get to build my own program. Men's sports from the ground up. Now if any of you boys want to see me, I'll be in my office.'

Two days later, Ronnie, Donnie and Dave tell me they have made their decision. We are sitting in "The Penthouse," a small room in Cromer Hall Dormitory. "Let's boogie," "Farrah Fawcett-Majors" and an assortment of Day-Glo black-lighted posters line the walls. And suddenly out it comes-the frustrations, the loyalties, the desperation. "Well, hell," Ronnie says. "We're sophomores. What would you do? Stick around here? I came to play for the man."

Donnie, pacing the floor, says, "I'm 19-I lay out one year, I still have two more to go. We're gonna stay out, lift weights, play in the-"

"City league," Dave interrupts, waving his hands. "Stay in shape. You know, The Citadel's been calling up. Package deal. They want the three of us. But, shit, that's a military school.'

Donnie walks to the window, turns

and frowns. "We don't wanna go down there. We're gonna go with Neild.'

"He didn't push us," Ronnie says, nodding. "We asked him. Know what he did? He just smiled.'

"Well, what would you do?" Dave says. "Who had you rather play for? Two thousand idiots or 4,000 screamin' foxes?"

"When we throw the first ball up in the air," Donnie says, "those girls are gonna go crazy!

"Damn right!" Dave says. "I'm takin' my broom and two bats to beat 'em off with."

"Yeah, and we'll be getting an education on top of it," Donnie says.

"One of those guys down the hall." Dave says, "came over to me and said, 'If you leave Newberry, I'll whip your ass.' I didn't say nothin'.

"See, Dave's from Kentucky sowe're all goin' to Kentucky next week during spring break," Donnie says. "So we told Neild, 'Announce it next week that we're goin' with you.' ''

"And see our ass will be in Kentucky and by the time we get back," Dave says, "everything'll be cooled down."

"Then we might not have to fight no-

body," Donnie says.

"You know what Henry Wilson told me?" Dave says. "He said, 'Neild ain't signed with Winthrop yet. Newberry oughta fire his ass right now. That'd show him.'

'And Neild 36 and one!" Donnie says in disgust.

"What the hell they want?" Ronnie

asks.
"It's like you had a good cow and she Dave says, "and then you butcher her and eat her and forget about them calves she gave you."

"Neild says he'd like to play Newberry first game," Donnie says, smiling.

"That'd be great!" Ronnie says. "Come into MacLean Gymnasium and whip Newberry's ass."

Thirty-six games in a row," Dave muses, then adds excitedly, "Hell, it's hard to win 36 straight checker gamesmuch less 36 straight basketball games. But we could do it. We could do it! Hell, it sure won't take 14 years this time."

Gordon signed with Winthrop College, and now the one man who linked Old Newberry with New Newberry is gone. The town's citizens, angry, defensive, have loosed a rockslide of resentment against Neild Gordon.

We'll have just as good a team next year." Henry Wilson says, touching his forehead where hair used to grow, as I have a final beer with him before leaving Newberry. "Just as good. Neild spent a lot of time building and all. But he was lucky."

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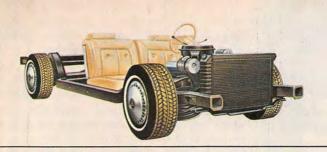
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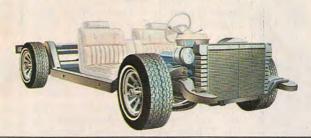
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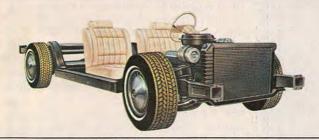
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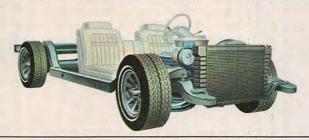












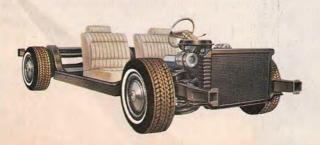














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## NCAA Sham

CONTINUED

the country receive these releases, which are definitely not written for sportswriters I know. Maybe for lawyers or college professors. These releases use long words to describe repetitious violations of complicated rules, and—on advice of NCAA legal counsel—they almost never mention specific names, dates or dollars.

Still, these releases represent a vast improvement in NCAA communication, and after slogging through the first 20 I began to translate faster. By No. 27 in the pile, Clemson University, I also began to boil with anger. Just look at some of those violations. Little Clemson, with a 1974 enrollment of 7,582, was offering to buy a house for a basketball prospect's mother and to pay all the house's utility bills while the son was at Clemson. Little Clemson was offering another basketball prospect a new car, new furniture for home and a "substantial" cash payment for the prospect's father. ("Substantial" usually means "thousands" in NCAA jargon.) One prospect and his friend both received cash at least six times during a booster's recruiting visits. A prospect received cash plus an offer of a substantial cash payment and additional cash each month he attended; all this if he would sign a letter of intent.

Kentucky offered a racehorse and substantial cash to a football prospect, who rejected the offer and went to another college. How do we know? The NCAA told us, though it wouldn't say where the kid went or what he might have been offered at *that* school.

The Minnesota case? You could see a whole basketball game in the time it would take to read through the full list of violations the NCAA uncovered there.

Still, as some cynics say, the worst thing the Minnesotas, Kentuckys and Clemsons did was get caught. Can anybody believe these universities were cheating in a vacuum?

Darrell Royal wants to see every coach be required to take an annual polygraph (lie-detector) test.

Abe Lemons wants to see stiffer penalties for the bandit players and coaches.

At the very least, plenty of us want to see the NCAA hire enough trained investigators to determine finally whether we're seeing the tip of an iceberg or an ice cube. I think an iceberg. What do you think? SPORT would like to know, especially if you have information about college cheaters who aren't getting caught.



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## "I'm doing what I want to do"

Going into the '76
Indy "500," driver
Tom Sneva had three
things on his mind:
The memory of his
driver-brother's death
weeks before;
the memory of his own
horrendous crash at
Indy one year before
(at right)—and winning

BY JOHN DEVANEY

om Sneva stood next to the Norton Spirit he would be driving the next day in the 1976 Indianapolis "500" and chatted with Roger Penske, the car's owner, and Jim McGee, the chief mechanic. Sneva was wearing sky-blue racing overalls, white boots and a baseball cap. Sandy-blond hair lapped at his collar and blue-tinted aviator's glasses wrapped around a face that, at 28, was still boyish. At first glance, Sneva looked like many of the drivers who lingered around the track on this hot May afternoon. But then I noticed his wrists. Encircling them were oxblood-colored loops that resembled fat rubberbands.

Actually, the loops on his wrists were scars, scars left by burns, garish reminders to Tom Sneva of how close he had come to flaming disintegration on this same track a year earlier.

It happened on May 25th, 1975, a darkening day, nearly midway through the 59th running of the "500." At the wheel of Penske's blue Norton Spirit, Sneva thundered at better than 200 miles an hour toward Indy's No. 2 turn. The rear left wheel of the Norton hooked the front right wheel of Eldon Rasmussen's car. Amid the roar and screech of shearing metal, Sneva's car flipped over and tumbled end over end down the asphalt track as hunks of chassis and engine pinwheeled skyward. Flames spit out of the exploding











## Tom Sneva

CONTINUED

fuel cells. Wheels spun lazily through the smoke. "The shock had knocked me unconscious," Sneva said later. "I thought I was dreaming that I was upside down in a racing car. Actually I was upside down in a racing car."

The smoking, flaming car rammed into a wall. Sneva tried to rise, gripping both sides of the white-hot cockpit. But the melting metal collapsed under his weight and he sagged into the flames before rescuers were able to drag him free. Within minutes Sneva's seared body was in an ambulance that screamed toward a hospital.

In the ambulance was his mother, who had been near the site of the crash. "There were blisters the size of grape-fruits on his back and arms," she told me a year later as we stood in Gasoline Alley outside the Penske garage, only a few yards away from her son and his two associates. "On the way to the hospital he came to. The first thing he said was, 'How's the car? What will Roger say about the car?"

Standing with us was her husband Ed, 47, a former driver who now builds race cars when he can get away from his Spokane, Wash., automotive business. The mother is birdlike pretty, fluttery, a tense smile fixed to her face. The father is fullback-size, a hearty laugher, a compulsive finger snapper. Now the fingers made clicking sounds and the face was somber as he talked of another crash with another Sneva at the wheel.

That one took place late in 1974 on a track in British Columbia. Driving was Tom's 24-year-old brother, Edsel Ford Sneva ("I knew when he was born he'd like cars," his father says). The family called Edsel "Babe" (they call Tom "Butch"). Halfway through the race, Babe's car blew a tire. The car caught air under its rear wings, lifted and soared over a wall. But it impacted cleanly—no fire—and stayed upright. Babe was taken, unconscious, to a hospital. For 18 months he lay in a coma, his damaged brain decomposing.

"What happened was so freakish," the father said outside the Penske garage. "Just as it was so amazing that Butch wasn't killed, it was amazing that Babe got hurt so bad." A few weeks before the Snevas came here to Indianapolis for this 1976 "500," Babe Sneva died. Like Tom, he was married and the father of two small children.

"Babe's dying, it has got to affect Butch before this year's race," the mother said. "Our youngest boy, Jerry, he's a driver here too. He passed his rookie test this year. But he won't be in the race because he hasn't been able to get a car to drive."

"All my boys wanted to be drivers, maybe because I was," the father said. "I built their first cars for them." He looked hard, almost challengingly, at me. "Heck," he said, "you can get killed driving on a road in your own car."

The mother said, "Sorrow and happiness are part of racing, and you can't go through life without feeling both."

Outside the Penske garage, meanwhile, Sneva, Penske and McGee had completed their discussion concerning the Norton Spirit's "stagger"-the width of the rear tires in relationship to the front tires-a crucial factor in controlling a 200-mile-per-hour race car. "Leave well enough alone" was the consensus. So far in these 1976 trials the Norton Spirit had done remarkably well, the fastest in carburetor day tests of any of the 33 starters. With a speed of 186.355 mph it was the third fastest in the first weekend of qualifying, winning the outside spot in the first row. On the pole was Johnny Rutherford, the 1974 winner, and in the middle was Gordon Johncock, the 1973 winner. In the middle of the second row would sit that beefy Texan, A.J. Foyt, beady eyes fixed on winning his fourth "500"more than anyone ever.

As Sneva came out of the garage, he saw me. Earlier he had promised an interview. "All righty," he said when reminded, grinning, but there was a testy let's-get-it-over-with attitude only partly cloaked by the smiling politeness. He walked inside the garage, sat on a table, feet dangling above this year's Norton Spirit.

Big shouldered and muscular. Sneva is a more compact copy of his father—about five-foot-11 and 175 pounds. His ocean-blue eyes are myopic enough to need glasses (he prefers contacts but regulations prohibit him from wearing them in a race). A smile usually hangs on the round face as though it had been put there and then forgotten, like a hat on a rack, while its owner studied serious business. The smile was Cheshire-wide and toothy and reminded me of the smile of a man then engaged in another race—James Earl Carter.

As Sneva talked—in that good ole boy Southern drawl that many drivers adopt, no matter where they grew up—he referred to himself nearly always as "we." I asked why. It was a habit, he said, acquired from being a part of racing teams where the driver, chief mechanic, owner and crew are equal parts. "Then if we lose," he said, his Carterish grin brightening, "we don't have to take all the blame. But if we win, we

can't take all the credit either."

He drove in his first race when he was still in high school, a 16-year-old math whiz and a letterman in football and basketball. The car was a 1938 Chevrolet modified for stock racing by his father, the track was a brightly lit oval near Spokane, where he grew up. "We were leading with a hundred feet to go," he said, "got hit by another car and put over a fence."

Undaunted, Sneva continued to race for the next seven years, winning various stock car and sprint car championships in the Northwest and Canada. When he wasn't racing, Sneva was going to school, majoring in education at Eastern Washington State College.

In 1971, at age 22, he drove in his first United States Auto Club race, finishing 21st in the Trenton 300. By 1974 he was a year-round race-car driver and he qualified for the Indy "500" for the first time; his qualifying speed of 185 mph was the fastest of the rookie drivers. In that "500" he ran fourth for awhile, then dropped out near the halfway point with grinding gears. That year Sneva finished high enough in other races to rank 17th in the United States Auto Club (USAC) standings. In 1975 he joined Roger Penske's team, snuggling into the cockpit of the Norton Spirit that came apart around him at 200 miles an hour in Indianapolis. Two days after the crash, badly burned, he sat in a hospital bed and told TV sportscaster Chet Coppock: "Not many people in this life get to do what they want to do. I'm doing what I want to do. Why should I quit?'

Now, a year later, I asked him how that horrendous crash in the 1975 "500" had affected him as a driver?

The Cheshire smile was wide but rigid as iron. "It wasn't until we saw the movies of the crash that we realized how fortunate we were," he said, the words coming out as soft and round as marshmallows. "Then, about three weeks after the crash, we started to practice for Pocono. We were pretty cautious the first day at the wheel, you know, touching that accelerator very gently on the turn, shying from the walls. It was pretty tough that first day, to put the crash out of our mind, but as long as you can put it out of your mind while you are in the race car, it's no hindrance."

The smile was very tight. "Trouble is," he said, eyes drilling mine, "when we would get out of the race car, we had all the media asking what it was like. We were trying to get it out of our mind, and everyone was trying to put it back in."

He glanced down at the glittering blue Norton Spirit. "Oh, we've had our ups and downs. No doubt about it. But after that crash at Indianapolis, we had a good finish in 1975." (He won the MilDon Prudhomme, Funny Car speed champ, counts on S-K tools.



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## Tom Sneva

CONTINUED

waukee ''150'' two months after the crash and finished sixth in the USAC point standings.)

But now his brother was dead. Would the memory of Babe's death, accompany him in this 1976 "500"?

"No," he said firmly. "We knew... you don't like to ever give up hope... but we knew a long time ago that Babe wasn't likely to live. And we knew that he passed on doing what he wanted to do, what he loved doing."

How about Tom's wife Sharon? How did his wife come to this race after consoling a sister-in-law who was now a widow with two young children?

"Well ..." Sneva took a deep breath. "It's hard being the wife of a race-car driver, no doubt about it. It takes a certain kind of woman to be one. Sharon is that kind. And she knows that we don't think we're daredevils. We have confidence in our ability, in our equipment, in the people who put it together. We don't feel racing is that dangerous."

An hour later I chatted with Bobby Unser, the two-time "500" winner, at the beer and chili party he and his brother Al host each year in Gasoline Alley on the eve of the "500." "What amazed us drivers about Tom," Unser said, a smile on his death's-skull face, "was him coming back so quick. He showed us something when he won that Milwaukee race only a couple of months after the crash."

As I savored the chili, though, I recalled the badly burned Sneva, in an ambulance, worrying what Penske would say about his wrecking a race car. It had been an instinctive reaction, hence a true one, the reaction of someone still not sure of his stature in a business where drivers blow \$25,000 engines and just whistle for new ones. Owners know that \$100,000 cars can be turned instantly into a pile of smoking junk. "Tom one day will be a great driver," Penske had told me earlier this day. "The biggest thing we have to do with him is to build up his confidence."

That afternoon Sneva walked down Gasoline Alley dressed in denim pants and a white silk sportshirt. "Good luck tomorrow," a mechanic called.

"All righty, thank you," Sneva said with a wave.

"And keep it on the track this time," the mechanic added, grinning.

Sneva laughed. It was not only the

Tom Sneva kept his Norton Spirit (right) on the track in the 1976 Indy "500"—the shortest ever—and finished sixth.

media who wouldn't let him forget what had happened here last year and what could happen here tomorrow.

Race day dawned white hot over the flat Indiana plain. Tom and Sharon Sneva awoke near seven in the bedroom of their condominium apartment on Georgetown Road, about a mile from the Speedway. They live here half the year while Tom races in the East and Midwest, the other half of the year they reside in a house in Spokane. Sharon, who is dark and petite, the type other women call "cute," made breakfast. She marveled for perhaps the hundredth time at how well Tom slept before races. This morning, though, she too felt an unusual calm.

The breakfast table was crowded: Tom and Sharon, their two children, Joey, five, and Amanda, four, and Sneva's parents. The children wouldn't be going to the Speedway. Sneva kissed them as he left. "Drive fast today, Daddy," Joey said. Sneva laughed and said he would.

At 9:30, 90 minutes before the start, he entered the Penske garage. He slipped out of denim slacks and a blue polo shirt, donned the Nomex flame-resistant underwear that drivers must wear, then the sky-blue racing coveralls and white boots. A friend carried his white Bell helmet as he and Sharon walked down Gasoline Alley toward the pits. He kissed Sharon quickly, the goodbye peck of a husband running for the 8:13. She watched his back until it vanished in the crowd around the pits. "I just feel that everything is going to go well today," she said to me.

"You think he'll win today?"



"Oh, no, just that everything will go well."

At the start of the race Sneva swung the Norton Spirit into third behind Rutherford and Johncock as the 33 cars hurtled safely through the first turn. Still in third place after ten miles, Sneva told himself: So far, so good. He was where he wanted to be, yet—like hundreds of drivers since the first "500" in 1911—he reminded himself that this race is won in the last hundred laps, not in the first hundred.

Near the 50-mile point Roger McCluskey's car spun and hit a wall. He was unhurt but the car threw debris that had to be swept off the track.

Restraining the Spirit to the required 80 miles an hour under the flashing yellow lights, Sneva snapped the car into the No. 2 turn. Suddenly, a hunk of steel crashed through the windshield and cracked him across the helmet. The swat stunned him and the car swaved. but Sneva recovered and steadied the car. He then looked down at his lap and saw what had come through the windshield—a spring from McCluskey's car. Wind swept through the hole in the windshield, tipping the car's aero-dynamic balance. The green light flicked on again and Sneva stood on the pedal but the car hooked through the turns and he had to let up. His speed dropped—from an average 179 miles an hour a lap to 178s, then to 177s.

He squealed into the pits and told Jim McGee what had happened. The shield was taped. The car ran truer but he could do no better than 178s and the Spirit faded to sixth.

Near the 175th mile, with the sky above the Speedway darkening, Sneva

pitted. By now he and Jim McGee had concluded that the stagger of the tires was not right for this day's track and tires only a fraction of an inch wider replaced the ones that had started. Sneva zoomed out and did a 180 lap, then a 181 lap. He was still in sixth as the cars boomed by the race's halfway point.

Then Sneva saw the red lights flash—the signal for the cars to pit. Rain splattered the gray ribbon of asphalt, halting the race. In the pit Sneva wiggled out of the cockpit. Sharon kissed him. A reporter asked stupidly why he couldn't seem to gain. "I made the car go as fast as I could," he said testily. "If I could've made it go faster, I would've." He turned to Sharon. "Let's go." Together they walked through the rain to the Penske garage.

The rain slowed, stopped, then beat down harder. The race was ended at 255 miles—the shortest "500" ever. The winner was Rutherford, Foyt second, Sneva sixth.

That cracked windshield still rankled as Sneva talked to reporters. "The whole thing is equipment," he said. "In racing there are no supermen."

"Well, you ended up in a little better shape than last year," a writer said.

Sneva's face was empty, then suddenly he understood. "That's for dang sure," he said.

From Indianapolis Sneva took the Norton Spirit to other races, finishing 14th in the 1976 USAC point standing, and looked ahead to challenging Indy a fourth time this year. "Sixth is okay," Tom Sneva said after last year's race, "but for every race-car driver there is only one goal—winning the '500."





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# George Brett Is a Magnificent Misfit

At a time when superstars and their agents are demanding super salaries, George dropped his agent and announced: "The Royals' first offer was more than what I wanted"

BY DICK SCHAAP

eorge Brett never dreamed that he would someday earn as much money as he now gets for playing baseball. He is openly grateful to the owner of the Kansas City Royals, Ewing Kauffman, and to the general manager, Joe Burke, for giving him that much money. He is also grateful to his manager, Whitey Herzog, and to his batting coach, Charley Lau, for what they have taught him and for the way they have treated him. Brett has told the owner that, even if his hands blister from batting practice and his arm stiffens from fielding practice, he is going to prove he is worth every penny he is being paid; and he has told the manager that, unless a significant bone is jutting jagged out of his body, he wants to play every game.

In other words, George Brett is appreciative, loyal and dedicated. He is, in the baseball milieu of today, a misfit.

George Brett is also a magnificent baseball player, the American League batting champion in 1976 at the age of 23, a .333 hitter, not a power hitter, really, but still the perpetrator of the most dramatic home run in the history of the Royals, a deceptively swift baserunner, a third baseman with impressive range if an erratic right arm (he is ambidextrous, which means that, if pressed, and if he takes off his glove, he can throw erratically with his left arm, too) and, more important than all that, a surprisingly charismatic athlete (surprising because "charisma" and "Kansas City" are rarely paired in free-association sessions) who has handled sudden fame and sudden fortune with unusual grace. His smile is as quick and effective as his bat; he laughs as enthusiastically as he breaks up double plays; and he just may be, despite his relatively modest price tag (his new five-year contract will bring him, in salary and bonuses, around \$1 million), the single most valuable piece of property in baseball.

"I wouldn't trade George for anyone



in the game," says Herzog. "He plays hurt, and he plays hard. He plays the way old-timers think the old-timers played."

Brett's teammates are awed by him. "I feel sorry for the opposing pitchers," says Larry Gura, who was an opposing pitcher himself until he joined Kansas City last season, "because no matter where you put the ball, George hits shots."

Even opponents admire him. "The thing I like best about George is that he is such a hard-assed player," says the Chicago White Sox' Ken Brett, who is George's brother.

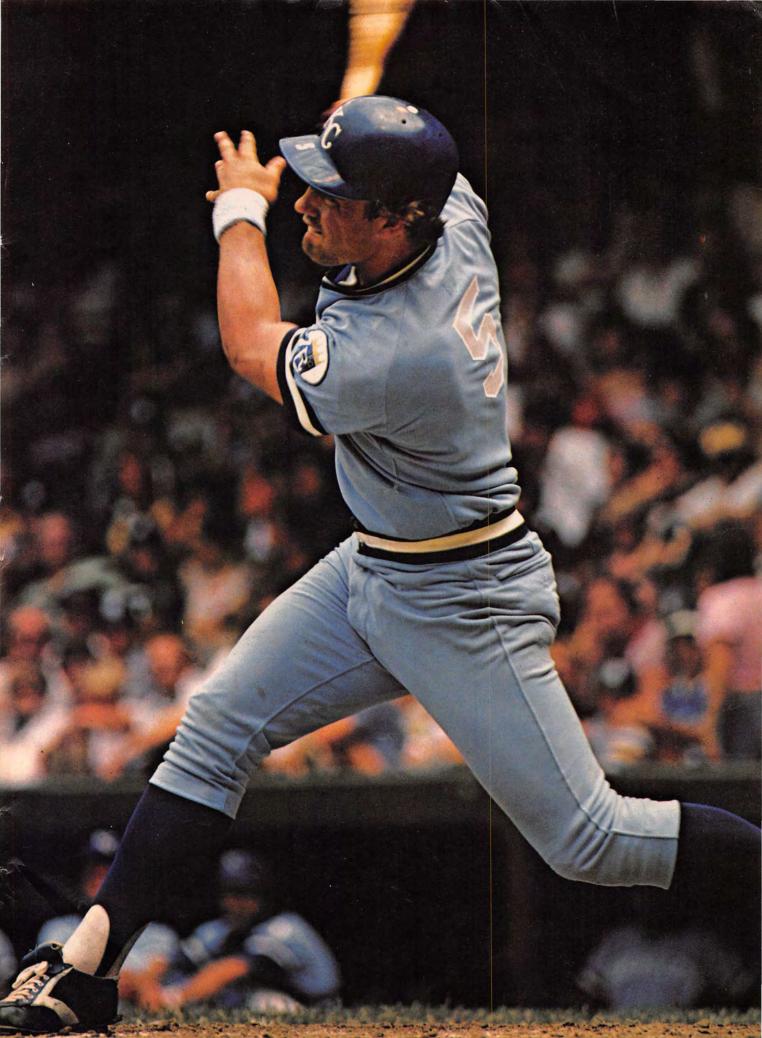
And while there is not a trace of false modesty in George Brett, there is the honest realization that at 24, in his fourth big-league season, he can still improve. "I got to drive in more runs," he confesses. "I got to. Thurman Munson said so."

Brett's blue eyes light up with his needling reference to the Yankee who beat him out as the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1976, the man with whom he waged a running war of words during the winter of 1976-77 (Brett knocked Munson for not showing up, as scheduled, at a couple of big banquets; Munson knocked Brett for driving in only 67 runs). Brett loves saying something outrageous. He loves being a Kansas City Royal. He loves being young and single and handsome and wealthy. He loves everything about playing professional baseball, or almost everything. . . .

George Brett strolled along the dock at the marina in Fort Myers, Fla. He stared at the yachts, the names of dozens of different ports painted on their sterns, and at the people who were relaxing on the decks. He saw them drinking wine and slicing cheese, and he remembered something he didn't like about playing baseball.

Opening Day was still a few weeks away, and Brett was calm as he stood on the dock. Watching the sun set over the Gulf. But earlier in the day, he had been furious. He had been playing against the Cincinnati Reds, the world champions, only an exhibition game, and he and the rest of the Royals were getting thoroughly drubbed. With a few innings to play, Herzog yelled to him, "You hit one more time, then come out," and Brett, in turn, said to Davy Nelson, the veteran infielder, "C'mon, Davy, get on base, save me a time at bat this inning. I don't want to go back out in the field for another inning. It's too hot, and we're getting our asses whipped.'

Nelson doubled to left, and Brett came up, to face Santo Alcala of Cincinnati. Alcala threw a fast ball, down the middle, grooved, the kind of pitch even mediocre batters pray for, and Brett swung, a controlled swing, a level swing, a swing that during 1976 turned fast balls into line drives. Brett, who tries to hit each pitch where it is thrown, who is not a guess hitter, is one of baseball's best opposite-field hitters, and now, from his lefthanded stance, he hit the ball to the opposite field. It was a





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# Brett

pop fly down the left-field line. Dave Concepcion drifted back from his short-stop position to make the catch, and as he squeezed the ball, Brett squeezed his bat, holding it by the thick end, and hammered the handle against the ground so violently the bat split in half. "I get mad at my own failures," Brett said later.

As he stared at the yachts tied up by the marina, Brett could forget that he was in a spring-training slump. He ran his hand through his sandy hair and smiled his little-boy smile. "I got a new stance," he said. "Stance 386, I think." He laughed. "I thought I had a great year last year, and everyone else thinks I should change and hit a few more home runs. I said, 'Okay—if that's what you want me to do."

"Everyone else? That mean Charley?"

Brett nodded.

Charley is Charley Lau, the Royals' batting coach, the most effective batting coach in baseball, the man whose theories seemed to turn little men like Freddy Patek and big men like John Mayberry into consistent line-drive hitters. If Charley Lau told George Brett that the best way to improve his hitting would be to wear gold earrings, Brett would have his ears pierced tomorrow. The two men have been friends ever since they shared a few bottles of imported St. Pauli Girl beer during spring training of 1973. Brett had never heard of St. Pauli Girl before then. He had never heard of Charley Lau, either. He certainly didn't know that Lau had a lifetime big-league average of .255, or he might not have listened so intently to Lau's hitting theories.

"You look like you might be able to hit," Lau said the first time he saw Brett, then 19 years old, in batting practice. "Yeah, you can pull the ball. Now let's see you hit the ball to left."

Brett tried to hit the ball to left, and failed. "Let's have a beer," Lau suggested to the teenager. Over their St. Pauli Girl, Lau talked to Brett about containing his swing, about making consistent contact, about concentrating on the ball and stinging it to the opposite field. The lessons began in the spring of 1973, and the intensified course came during the 1974 season.

Brett started the 1974 season in the minor leagues, but just about when he turned 21, the Royals brought him up and inserted him in the lineup. Two months later, by the All-Star break, Brett's batting average was around

.200. ("I can't understand why I wasn't picked for the game," Brett can say now, through his grin.) Just before the mid-vear break, Lau walked up to Brett and said, "Want to learn how to hit?"

'Yeah," said Brett.

"Meet me early at the workout," said Lau.

The Royals had a workout the last day of the All-Star break, and from then on. for weeks and weeks. Brett went to the ballpark each afternoon, four or five hours before a night game, at home and on the road, and worked in the batting cage. Lau watched. "You're holding the bat too high," Lau said. "Put it down on your shoulder. Try to hit the ball over second base."

Brett wore out batting cages. His hands blistered and bled from hitting practice. And his average soared. 'Let's set a goal of .260 for the year,' Lau said. Brett batted better than .300 for the last three months of the seasonraising his final average to .282-and

then he hit .308 for the full 1975 season. "With all you know about hitting," someone once asked Lau, "how come

you only hit .255?"

"I didn't know so much then," said Lau, who is in his middle 40s, "And I didn't have a videotape machine.'

"I owe him my life," Brett overstated, standing at the marina in Fort

Myers.

After the exhibition game against Cincinnati, Brett had played a few sets of tennis with Davy Nelson. Brett was still fairly new to the game. He served righthanded, yet his backhand, because of his lefthanded strength, was unusually strong for a novice.

"George is a tremendously gifted athlete," said Nelson, after the tennis match. "He hates to lose. He busts his ass on the tennis court. He wants to be the best at whatever he does.

Nelson, a bachelor who is in his ninth big-league season, is one of the brighter and more personable men in professional baseball. He is a reader, a talker, a thinker-a student of life and of the game-sort of an assistant manager on the Royals. "You can't have one of those nice intellectual conversations with George," said Nelson, "but he's not a dumb person. He has handled all the attention he's gotten remarkably well. He has all the makings of being a national hero. He can put Kansas City on the map.'

When Brett first joined Kansas City, Nelson was with Texas. "We didn't particularly like him," Nelson recalled. "If you didn't know him, you got the wrong impression. He walked around as though he was the cockiest player in the world. And he had the red-ass real bad-still does sometimes. He'll go four



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for four, then hit a pop up, and he'll throw his helmet at the water cooler.'

Nelson, who is black, says that Brett. unlike many athletes, or doctors, or lawyers, or writers, is not prejudiced. 'George doesn't even notice color-except once," Nelson said. "He came up to me one time, during the off-season, couple of years ago, when we were both living in California, and he said, 'Hey, I heard you're living with a white girl.' And I said, 'No, I'm living with a friend.' George laughed. He didn't mean anything by what he said."

Now, having taken out his aggressions on his bat and on the tennis court. Brett stood on the dock, calm and relaxed, looking forward to the next day when the Royals would play an exhibition doubleheader in Sarasota against the Chicago White Sox. George's brother, Ken, was going to pitch one of the two games. George was looking forward to seeing his older brother. Ken had always been George's hero.

There are four Brett brothers, and all four played professional baseball. John, the oldest at 30, had the most desire-



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# Brett

but the least ability—and when he was released by the Boston Red Sox after one minor-league season, he was deeply hurt. Bobby Brett, the second youngest, also lasted one year in the minors, but the end of his baseball career did not particularly bother him. He went into the real estate business, and he has been very successful.

There is only four and a half years difference in age between Ken and George, and now that seems like a small gap. Once it seemed vast as the Pacific. When George was 14 years old, Ken was pitching in a World Series, for the 1967 Red Sox. A year or two earlier, when George was in junior high, Ken was *the* athletic hero of Southern California, a star for El Segundo High's baseball, football and basketball teams. When George was a senior, starring on a strong El Segundo team, the scouts would say, "Let's take a look at Brett's brother. Which one's Brett's brother?"

"I never thought I'd be as good as Ken," George Brett remembered. "You know, I wasn't very competitive then. My brothers had to coax me to play. I wasn't a lazy kid, but we just lived a mile from the ocean, and I always wanted to go to the beach. They'd say, 'No, no, no,' and they'd make me shag fly balls for them, and then they put up a batting tee in the garage, and I'd spend hours hitting into a canvas.

It is very hard to imagine George Brett not being competitive; he is so fierce now. "I have to be," he said, 'cause I know how hard I worked to get here. I got out of high school, I didn't have the grades to get into a lot of colleges. I wanted to go right into baseball. I figured Los Angeles or the Angels or the Padres would draft me right off in the first round, but they didn't. Kansas City took me in the second round. I said, 'Who is Kansas City?' I didn't even know where it was. I got \$25,000 for signing, but I lost it all. I made bad investments. Never did like cattle, anyway. The first year I went to spring training with the big club, they wanted to make me into a catcher. I didn't want that. Then, the first season I played in the majors, I didn't think I'd stay up. Now I have to play hard. I'm getting a lot of money. I have to perform like the money they're paying me."

Brett could have gotten more money from the Royals than they are paying him. He could have squeezed them for every possible cent—or he could have had his agent, Jerry Kapstein, the lord of the free agents, squeeze them. But he didn't. Instead, Brett dropped his agent and handled his negotiation himself. "The Royals' first offer was more than what I wanted," Brett said. "Joe Burke told me to write it down. I didn't know how to write numbers that big.

"I didn't want to say to them, 'Hey, thanks a lot, I'll see you guys later.' Because these people have always been good to me. They've always treated me like a man—even when I was 17 years old. Everybody in the organization, right up to the owner. Mr. Kauffman—he's a self-made millionaire in the pharmaceutical business—he's given me financial advice when I've needed it. I like playing for one man, not for a con-

### "I have to play hard," Brett says. "I have to perform like the money they're paying me"

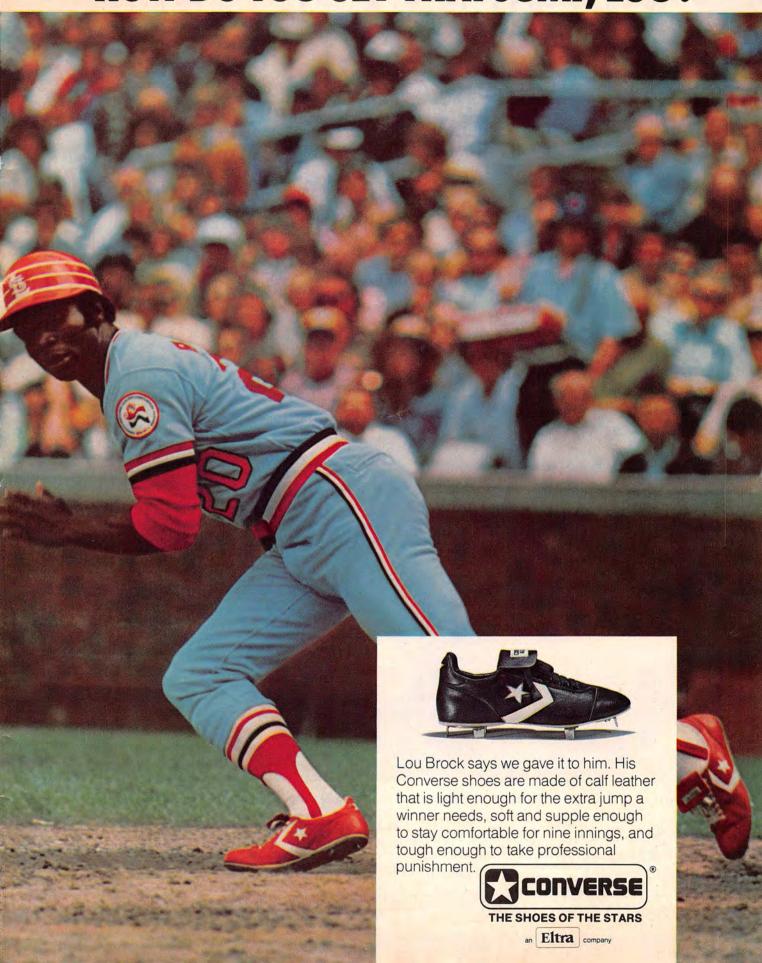
glomerate. I want to spend my whole career playing for one man in one town. Kansas City's been good to me. I've bought myself a 52-year-old house. I'm going to be there for five years, anyway, and after that I hope I get another five-year contract."

"Does it seem unreal to you, the money you're making?"

Brett laughed. "Yeah," he said, "I can't believe it. I never thought I'd make it. I remember a couple of years ago, when John Mayberry signed a two-year contract for something like 50 grand a year, and when he walked into the locker room, he was walking like 50 grand. I was making about \$600 a month then, and I thought that was a lot."

Brett's financial relationship with his team is an exceedingly rare one, in these days of negotiators and renegotiators, of free agents and whining superstars, and part of his happiness may stem from his brother Ken's unhappiness. Ken has been with six different teams in the past six seasons. "I've bounced around so much," Ken Brett was saying the next day, before pitching against his brother, and I don't really know why, I'm not a troublemaker. Maybe it's because I'm single. Maybe because I go out with girls, I don't know. George knows that in a way I'm bitter, and he knows he's been treated well because he knows the way I've been treated. People have lied to me. Gabe Paul [the Yankees' general manager lied to me last year. I've been bounced around like a piece of trash. George has had it really good. George is

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## Brett

lucky-plus he's got ability."

Then Ken Brett, who is a skilled pitcher and an accomplished hitter (he once hit home runs in four straight games he pitched), walked down to the bullpen to warm up to pitch against his brother. "Hey, George," a fan yelled to Ken. "Have a good season."

Ken Brett winced. "My baby brother," he said, "and I get called by his name. It really pisses me off. He's even taking away my girls." Ken, who is brighter than George, more perceptive, more sensitive, shook his head. "He was always known as my brother," he said. "You know, that may have had something to do with how good he's gotten."

The funny part-the beauty part-is that George Brett still looks up to his brother Ken. George is the superstar awed by the journeyman-and it is a lovely thing. He turns to his brother for advice, on hitting and on dating (when Ken went to the National League for a few seasons, he gave George all his American League phone numbers) and he defends his brother fiercely. Last year, during the American League playoffs, when Yankee manager Billy Martin set out to unsettle George Brett, he did it by screaming obscenities not about George himself, or about George's female relatives-Martin is not above that-but about George's brother Ken. Martin had discarded Ken earlier in the season—"He couldn't break into our lineup." the manager said-and, in the vilest language, Martin kept letting George know how little he thought of Ken.

Martin's remarks got to George Brett. They got to him in the first inning of the first playoff game when he committed two throwing errors. The Yankees scored two runs that inning and were on their way to a 4-1 victory.

Martin's remarks got to George Brett in the fifth playoff game, too, in the eighth inning, with the Yankees in front, 6-3, and with two out and two men on base. Then George Brett hit a scoretying home run, and if he had stuffed the fat end of his bat all the way down Billy Martin's throat, George Brett could not have been happier.

George Brett stuck it to Billy Martin in the eighth inning, and in the ninth, Chris Chambliss stuck it to Kansas City. After Chambliss' home run propelled the Yankees into the World Series, George Brett sat in the locker room and cried. He cried for himself and

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by Margaret Court

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than Dr. Scholl's? It's your advantage!'



## Brett

for his teammates and for the brother he had failed. And yet, eight hours later, after no sleep, George Brett had the courage and the grace to appear on *Today*, with Chris Chambliss and with Reggie Jackson, to congratulate Chris, to charm millions of viewers with his messed-up hair and his little-boy grin and, when he was told, "And now for another look at Chris' home run," by

saying. "Do we have to?"

Now, in Sarasota, in Payne Park,
George Brett came to bat against Ken
Brett. Down in the bullpen, Larry Gura
said, "You know, Jim Colborn was with
Milwaukee last year, and he says
there's a spot to pitch George where he
can't hit the ball. Says the spot's about
this big." He held his fingers about an
inch and a half apart. "Hit that spot, and
he can't do anything." Gura smiled.
"Roberto Clemente had a spot like that.
Low and outside, just on the black,
He'd never swing at the ball there. Same
idea with George. 'Course, if you miss
that little spot. . . ."

Clemente's lifetime batting average was .317.

Ken Brett threw his first pitch to George Brett. He threw at a spot—at George's head. The pitch was a slow fast ball, and George jumped easily out of the way, feigning anger, lifting his bat as though he would go after the pitcher. Then the brothers settled down and George popped up to the infield. He heaved his batting helmet into the dugout, then grinned.

That night, the two brothers went out to dinner in Sarasota. Ken, who earns a decent salary, bought dinner for the millionaire-to-be. "I'll never let him pay," Ken said. He's my baby brother."

A few days later, George Brett stood on the dock once more and looked at the yachts. He was hoping that someone aboard the yachts would invite him aboard. "I just want to see what one's like," said George Brett.

And then he laughed. "You want to know the one thing I really don't like about baseball?" he said.

"Sure."

"That it's played in the summer. I wish it were played in the winter, that all the stadiums were domed and that I could have the summers off to go to the beach. I'd really like that."

"Any other complaints with baseball? Any other complaints with your life?"

"Nope."

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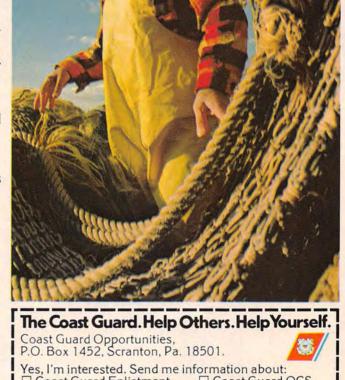
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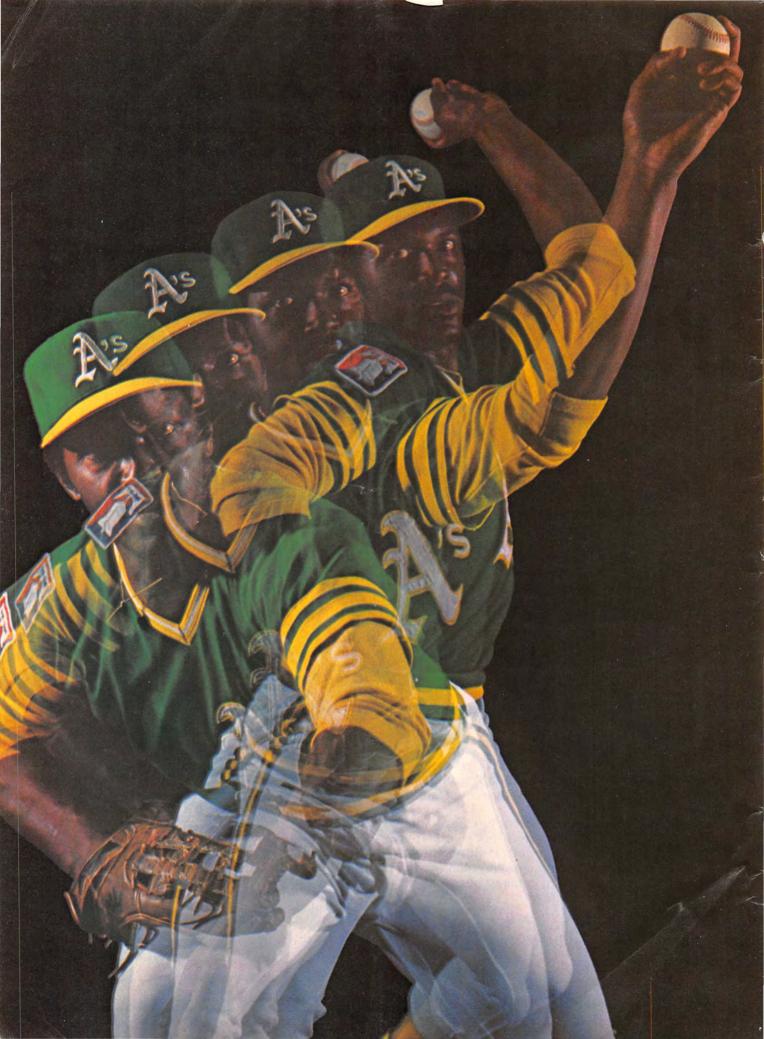
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## Vida Sings the Blues

"The only time I can forget all my hassles with Charlie Finley is when I'm pitching," says Vida Blue. "He treated me like a damn colored boy"

### BY MARTY BELL

ida Blue leans over the steering wheel of his rented Pontiac trying to find his way to a restaurant in Scottsdale, Ariz. The sand storm that blew in from the mountains west of Mesa at mid-afternoon and cut short the Oakland A's first day of spring training has calmed. But it is evening now and in the dust-filled darkness we can see only a few feet in front of our car.

He drives slowly, cautiously, staring intently at the road. Yet even now he is plagued by the demon in his life.

"Let me interview you a little bit, man," he says. "What do you think of Charles O. Finley?"

I say Finley is a great showman, that he is calculatedly charming face-toface, and I am in the middle of saying I would never trust the man when Vida's singing interrupts me:

"Charlie O. the mule, Charlie O. the mule,

"He goes where the A's go, just like me and vou."

He repeats the refrain. Then he says, "The ol' mule died this winter. Ain't that too bad." He chuckles with his mouth closed. He is exaggerating his words and sounds just like Bill Cosby doing Fat Albert. "Wonder what kind of mascot Charles O. Finley is going to come up with this summer. Probably dress someone up like Vida Blue and parade him around the field with a rope around his neck. Wouldn't that be appropriate."

He is silent for a long moment, thinking, then he begins to sing his version of Sinatra's nostalgic, melancholy song:

"Nineteen-seventy-one, it was a very good year. . . ."

The stormy recent history of the Oakland A's has clouded the memories of that 1971 season. Vida Blue, then 22 and in his first full major-league season, won 24 games and lost 8, had an earned run average of 1.82, struck out 301 hitters, won the American League's Cy Young and Most Valuable Player awards. But these impressive feats don't tell the full story of Blue's performance.

Vida Blue was as refreshing that year as Mark Fidrych was in 1976. Like the

bushy-headed Tiger pitcher, Blue thrilled baseball crowds with his youthful exuberance. He sprinted to and from the mound, threw his fastball right at the strengths of the best hitters, daring them to make contact and, when they could not, he strutted around his small hill at the center of the diamond as if he were doing the funky chicken. And Blue's boss, Charles O. Finley, played on the pitcher's style, presenting his star with a baby-blue Cadillac Eldorado equipped with license plates that read BLUE and throwing in a flashy wardrobe so that this young man from tiny Mansfield, La., was suddenly transformed into a big-time city slicker.

Blue was Finley's puppet and there was no limit to the owner's manipulations. At one point, Finley called Blue in the middle of the night and suggested the pitcher legally change his name to "True" Blue since it might increase his own popularity and the team's gate. "Only if you change your name to True O. Finley," Blue told his boss.

During the off-season, Charlie's and Vida's playful sparring turned into a grudge match. Blue asked for a \$92,500 contract and Finley refused to pay him more than \$50,000. They baited and insulted each other in print.

Vida sat out training camp and the first month of the 1972 season, then broke down and signed for \$63,000. But when he returned to the A's, his teammates said he was a different man. Blue agreed. "Charlie Finley has soured my stomach for baseball," he said. "He treated me like a damn colored boy."

Blue sulked and struggled through a 6-10 season, after which a reporter asked him: "Will there ever be joy in baseball for you again?"

"Only if someone else takes over the team," Vida said, "or if I get traded."

Vida's blues plagued him through the next three seasons. He won consistently and sulked constantly. He spoke of his boss like a whipped slave speaks of his massa. It seemed that if there was any way to escape, Blue would.

Before the 1976 season began, the Messersmith-McNally court decision

gave players with expired contracts the right to sell themselves to the highest bidder. Blue now had the escape hatch he claimed he wanted. Along with six of his most talented teammates (Sal Bando, Joe Rudi, Bert Campaneris, Don Baylor, Gene Tenace and Rollie Fingers), he began the season without a contract, intending to play out his option.

But on the morning of June 15, the intraleague trading deadline, Finley, at his Chicago office, called Vida at the Oakland office of his agent and real-estate partner, Chris Daniels. After four hours of negotiating, Blue agreed to sign a three-year contract that would pay him \$135,000, \$175,000 and \$205,000.

"I thought the offer was substantial so I signed," Blue says. "Now you say to me, 'But you hate Finley's guts,' and I do. But then I think: I got to be able to live with myself, I got to do what's right for Vida."

Before Blue hung up the phone, Finley told him, "Vida, I would never let you go."

When Vida and his agent drove toward the Oakland Coliseum to sign the contract, they heard Finley being interviewed by phone on station KGO. "Vida Blue has signed with the A's," Finley said, "and he's going to be with the A's for the next three years."

Vida signed the contract, drove Daniels back to his office, then came back to the Coliseum. He was scheduled to pitch that night. When he entered the locker room, he was rushed by a herd of reporters. "How does it feel to be going to the New York Yankees?" one reporter asked.

"I was stunned," Vida says. "I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. But I couldn't let them know that. I coulda won an Academy Award for the performance I put on. I acted as if I had been involved in the whole deal. But that was bullshit. Finley had lied to me. I bet the deal was made between the time I hung up with Finley and got to the ballpark to sign. I later heard rumors that Finley had George Steinbrenner [the Yankees' owner] monitor our call."



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## Blue

CONTINUED

Blue did not pitch that night. After the game, he went home and phoned Steinbrenner, who had paid a reported \$1.5 million for the pitcher. "He was very warm and made me feel very good about becoming part of the Yankee tradition," Blue says.

Then he phoned Finley in Chicago. "He answered the phone and I could not control myself," Blue says. "I just talked for about ten minutes without letting him say a word. I used some very choice words myself. He told people that I said I hoped the next breath he took was his last. I wouldn't say that to Mr. Finley. The deal could fall through and I wanted him to live to pay me. But I might have said that I hoped he'd get polio."

Blue spent the next two days packing up his Oakland apartment and saying goodbye to his friends. On the morning he was to leave for New York, a Western Union delivery boy rang his bell and handed Blue a telegram. It was from commissioner Bowie Kuhn. "In the best interests of baseball," it read, "this sale has been voided and you are to re-

main with the Oakland team until further notice."

"Hey, man, I didn't know what was going on," Blue says. "Mr. Finley and the commissioner were having their own personal battles at my expense." Finley went to court to challenge Kuhn's right to the sale, but he lost his case in March. Vida was not concerned

"I've just got these bad feelings inside me that I can't let go"

about the fact that six of his teammates moved on to new clubs and new contracts which, in some cases, far exceeded the one Blue signed. But he was bitter about having to remain in the employ of a man he despises.

As Vida pulls into a parking space a few blocks from the restaurant in Scottsdale, he says, "I've just got these bad feelings inside me that I can t let go. If I knew how to release them I would, but I just can't. If I could get these bad feelings out, I'd be a much more pleasant

person to myself and others. But they just come and go. Off and on. Off and on. Off and on."

Earlier this afternoon, at the training camp, I saw Vida shifting moods, from joy to depression, from enthusiasm to cynicism, from moment to moment.

When I arrived at the field, the team photographer was running around posing the individual players for mug shots to fill the press guide. He added confusion to an already chaotic situation. With a new manager and coaching staff, six regulars gone and no veteran on the roster who could play first base, third base or make the designated hitter any more potent than a hitting pitcher, the A's—who between 1972 and '74 had won three consecutive World Series—seemed like an expansion team.

The photographer called Vida Blue. Blue walked over slowly, his white-shoed feet spread at ten minutes to two, wearing a filthy faded green and gold

"We gotta get him a new cap," the photographer said.

"Nah, nah," said Vida, imitating Fat Albert. "You can't shoot me anyway 'cause I didn't shave today. But you'll have no trouble with the other guys. Most of them are too young to shave."

A few minutes later, Blue walked out to the pitcher's mound. Behind him stood a few young men wearing new, clean hats for the first time. Most of the infield positions were vacant, but Blue didn't even look behind him. He threw a few warm-up pitches then the first batter stepped in.

"Fastball, low and away," Blue shouted and went into his smooth windup. His hands met behind his head, then, as they came down in front of him, his right knee rose and almost touched his chin, his leg shooting out and his whole body rolling slowly forward. His left arm moved no quicker than the rest of his body, but when he released the ball, it exploded in the catcher's glove. Like all the best pitchers, Blue gets his speed from the movement of his body, not by whipping his arm.

The ball sailed in high and away, Blue shook his head in disgust and yelled to the batter: "Sorry."

Then he shouted, "Fastball, low and away." This time he put the fastball where he wanted it and pounded his glove to congratulate himself. He continued this routine, calling out the destination of each pitch. He didn't glance anywhere but at his target, made no unnecessary gestures. His eyes opened wide with joy each time he hit his spot. It was apparent that, when Vida Blue was pitching well, the bad feelings dissolved and, for those moments at least, he was happy.

After throwing for 15 minutes, he came off the mound and strutted past the geriatric crowd sunning themselves in the bleachers, the tension in the young lefthander once again present.

"Looked good out there," Ed Munson, the A's traveling secretary, told

Blue.

"Don't praise me, pay me," Vida snapped and he kept walking.

An elderly man stopped him and shoved a ball in his face. "You can sign my ball for me," the elderly man said.

"Don't tell me. Ask me," Vida said. There was an uncomfortable silence. Then the elderly man meekly asked Vida to sign his ball. Vida did.

He signed some more autographs and walked towards the locker room. A tiny black man, no more than five-foot-six, about 35 years old, carrying an airline flight bag, approached him. "Hey, man, remember me? I met you in Arizona last year," the man said.

Vida looked down at him. "Yeah, yeah," he said.

"Who's the boss around here?" the man asked. "I wanna job. I wanna play me some ball. You know?"

Vida held in his smile. He put his arm around the man and walked him over to the A's new manager Jack McKeon. I assumed the guy was some former ballplayer I didn't recognize. After all, this camp was full of old players looking for new jobs. Billy Conigliaro and Blue Moon Odom had shown up earlier in the day for a tryout. Vida left the tiny man with McKeon and walked back to me.

"Who is that?" I asked.

"Never saw him before," Vida said.

"He's not a player?" I asked.
"Not yet. Wants to be. Isn't it every man's dream?" He rolled his eyes.

After agreeing to meet later for dinner, Vida walked towards the locker room. I watched the dust cloud moving in to ruin a beautiful day and considered what I had just seen. Here was a man who loved his work, who reached an almost euphoric state when pitching, but who was plagued by the man who employed him. And so Vida was fighting himself, not letting himself enjoy the only work he ever wanted to do. It was as if he felt obligated to constantly remind himself and everyone else that he was unhappy.

Vida and I walk into the Pink Pony Steak House in Scottsdale. A blue-andwhite Chicago Cubs banner hangs behind the bar. The wall around the banner is covered with amateurish caricatures of baseball personalities who would not be recognizable if they were not labeled.

Vida stands looking at the wall, spots a drawing of Ernie Banks and bursts



into an accurate imitation of the ebullient former Cub: "Hey ain't it just great to be alive. Look at this great game. Greatest job in the world. Look at all the nice people who come to see me. Hey, they shouldn't pay us to play. We should pay them. I'm gonna play two games today. Not one. Two! Gonna play until it gets dark! Hey, ain't it great to be a baseball player!"

He pauses, then, in a low, disgusted voice, he says, "Sheeeeeeeet."

We sit at a table. Vida orders a Tom Collins and a steak from the waitress, and notices the woman is writing with her left hand.

"Hey, you're a lefty. That's good," he tells her.

"You must be a baseball player," she says.

says.
"No, ma'am. I'm not," he says. "Actually, I'm a Prudential Insurance salesman. Could I interest you in buying a piece of the rock?"

She laughs. "I don't believe you."

"Why not?" he asks.

"The baseball players all like lefties."

"Well, ma'am," Vida says, "it just so happens I sell insurance lefthanded."

The waitress walks away grinning. Vida looks around the room and spots some executives of the Cubs at a nearby table. He spins around so they cannot

see him.

"If I knew this was a baseball hangout, I wouldn't have brought you here," he says quietly.

"Why is that?" I ask.

"I don't know. I just don't like places where baseball people hang out."

He is no longer frisky. No longer wisecracking. The waitress sets his drink in front of him and he slides the fingers of his right hand up and down the cool glass. A gold bracelet with "V. Blue" spelled out in diamonds hangs from his right wrist. He stares into his drink, makes a "tsk" sound, puts his left elbow on the table and rests his head in his left hand. His long face lengthens now. A recently grown moustache and the receding hairline of his short afro have added years to his handsome baby-face. His cheeks are angular, his chin is flat and wide and his skin, tinted by the Arizona sun, is now almost rosewood.

"Your problems seem to be strictly with Finley," I say to him. "Why are you uncomfortable around baseball people?"

He makes a "tsk" sound again. Then, staring into his drink, he begins to speak quietly, carefully, painfully: "Baseball's just not the same to me anymore. I love playing, but I hate everything that comes with it.

"In 1971, I played for \$14,750 and I

## Blue

had a good time, like when I was a kid. As a child I played until dark every day and I woulda done the same thing that year. I saw a lot of myself watching Fidrych last year. I could relate to what he was going through. I bet he loved every minute. In 1971, I did too.

"But then that contract thing happened and I really took my lumps. Mr. Finley embarrassed me, and I went from 24 and 8 to 6 and 10. You know

what that feels like?

"I wasn't used to losing like that. And I found out who my friends were. For a lot of people, I had to win to be their friend. What kind of bullshit is that? I can't accept that. I'm not gonna let you be my friend just because I pitch good.

"I'd go home and cry after games. I just never thought people could be the way they are, you know, coming from a small town like Mansfield and all. In Mansfield, we always played with a full deck. People liked me because they liked me and it didn't matter if I won or lost."

He is still staring into his drink. "Tsk. I'm a person before I'm a ballplayer. I'm somebody's son before I'm a ballplayer. I'm somebody's brother before

I'm a ballplayer. I'm somebody's father before I'm a ballplayer. It's too bad every fan can't get to meet this baseball player and see what kind of person he is.''

He glances up from the drink he hasn't sipped yet. His eyes are open wide trying to keep tears from falling out. He lowers his eyes again and sits there silently until the food arrives. Then Vida takes a deep breath, looks up and forces a grin.

"Vida," I say, "these things you're telling me about were caused by a lot of different people, yet you push all the blame on Finley. It's as if you're ob-

sessed with the man.'

"I am that," he says. "I thought about going to see a psychiatrist once or twice. But then I said, nah, that won't help. I'll still have to deal with Charlie

Finley every day."

I explain to him that from my limited knowledge of psychiatry, it might help him focus on himself and forget Finley. Vida ignores me, saying, "I know I can't trust the man. I can't believe a word he says. How can anyone live with that? And now I just keep thinking that if I didn't sign that contract, I'd be someplace else now. I did myself in. I'm embarrassed to be in this position."

He looks up towards the pictures on the wall, but not at them. "You know what I wish?" he says. "I wish the man would just sit down with me and tell me what his goals are as far as the team is concerned."

"Come on, Vida," I say to him.
"When the team was successful, you were miserable. If he rebuilds the team, that won't change your feelings toward him."

He's embarrassed. His nose scrunches into a mass of wrinkles. "Well, yeah. I just keep wondering if I'm traded to another team if I can get rid of these feelings and enjoy myself again. I spend a lot of time worrying about what my destiny is in baseball."

I ask him what he does with his free time, and he says he watches television. I ask if he plays golf or tennis or basketball or any of the other games athletes usually play and he laughs. "Nah, I don't do none of that."

"You just sit and worry."

"Yeah, I do a lot of that. But I got a lot to worry about. My father died whan I was 17 and I'm the oldest of six kids. I got the responsibility of taking care of my mother and the others. I figure I'm making some money so I try to give them things they never had.

"And I gotta worry about being a complete father to my little boy. Whether he's illegitimate or legitimate, he's a big part of my life. He was born the day I came home to Mansfield from Burlington, Iowa, after my first year in the minors. Surprise!

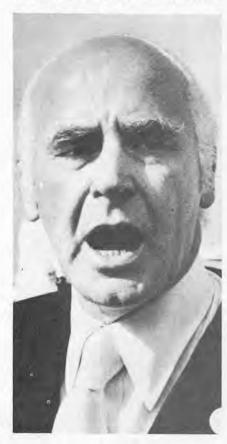
"It was just something that happened, you know. I couldn't keep it in my pants then. My head was harder than Japanese arithmetic. So I got me into some trouble. And I worried a lot.

"Hey, let's face it. I loused up a girl's life. She was a sophomore in college and her sister was putting her through school and she had to give that up. And she was a Southern Baptist and they threw her out of the church. Her mother was really into us getting married, but I couldn't marry her just because of the baby.

"My boy, Derek, he's ten now. Two years ago, I persuaded him and his mother to come live in Oakland. I knew he needed another half. I also wanted him to grow up without the Louisiana dialect that I sometimes have. So I brought him to California and I'm putting his mother through school.

"We go out occasionally . . . the three of us. We're not into any intimate thing, you know. I just enjoy doing things with the two of them. . . . But I still have some sleepless nights about the whole thing. She had a real good future. She was hurt. Her family has turned their backs on her. I'd do anything I could for her and for Derek. I

When Finley asked him to change his name to "True Blue," Vida said, "Only if you change your name to True O. Finley."





don't know what else I can do."

He takes a deep breath, then cuts into his steak. While he chews, he begins talking again. "You know where else I worry? On the bench. I can't stand the days I don't pitch. If I could pitch every day, I would. You bet. In fact, I've been considering trying something."

He puts down his fork and his voice fills with excitement. "I do everything righty but pitch. I eat righty, I write righty, I shoot pool right, I hug a girl righty. I bet I could teach myself to pitch righty. It'd add years to my career."

Suddenly his voice drops in tone and volume. "Only thing is, the way I've been feeling about baseball, I'm not sure how long I wanna stay in the game. I didn't even wanna come to spring training. I didn't wanna have to put up with any more of Mr. Finley's bullshit. But I figured if I blasted him, he'd just keep me here longer to get back at me.

"If I can just get outta here, I know I can get that good feeling back."

Abruptly he smiles again. In a voice that is a cross between Fat Albert and a Southern preacher, he says, "But one day, I will be free. I'll cross the river of no return and I will be free."

By morning, the wind has passed through, the dust is settled, the A's are back at practice. While Vida is in the outfield shagging fly balls, I talk with some of the veteran A's and mention Blue's obsession with Finley. They are surprised, saying Vida has never discussed it with them.

"Maybe you've given him a podium to vent some of his feelings," says centerfielder Bill North. "He might be overstating it. I can't believe he's obsessed. I sure hope he's not. He's got too much else in his life to be obsessed."

"I think Vida's frustrated because there's no one here to talk to," says pitcher Mike Torrez. "When I was with the Orioles, they had a big front office and if something bothered you, there was always someone there to talk to. But Charlie Finley's the owner and the general manager and he's in Chicago. It almost seems as if there's no organization here, like we're playing in a vacuum. We just play ball and get a check every few weeks. That's all."

"I'll tell you one freaking thing," says manager Jack McKeon, spitting out tobacco juice and expletives after every few words. "He wants to have a helluva freaking season wherever the hell he pitches. Lot of young freaking guys act like the freaking game owes them something. Not Vida. Looks to me like he's just bubbling over with enthusiasm. And that's no bullshit.

"Just look at him out there shagging

freaking fly balls. You think that don't mean nothing? Here's a quote for you. Altitude makes. . . . No that's not right. Okay, here it is. Attitude makes altitude. Freaking right!"

Later in the afternoon, there's laughter in Vida's hotel room when I knock on the door. Vida opens the door, sees me and breaks into a chorus of "Charlie O. the Mule."

Then he introduces me to pitchers Mike Norris and Blue Moon Odom, who leave. "The players you told me you were friendly with were surprised," I tell him, "when I described your obsession with Finley."

Vida sits down in a chair next to me, thinks for a long moment, then says, "Look, I don't talk to everyone about this. They see me whan I'm pitching. And that's the only time I can forget all my trouble and these Charlie Finley hassles. Whether I win or lose, the feeling is the same. A good feeling. I'm a different person when I'm pitching.

"But the other days. Tsk. You know, every time our plane lands in Chicago [where Finley has his office] I'm already on the defensive. It's whose gonna insult who this time. Who's gonna embarrass who this time.

"Oh," he growls, "I hate thinking about it. Maybe I should go see a psychiatrist."

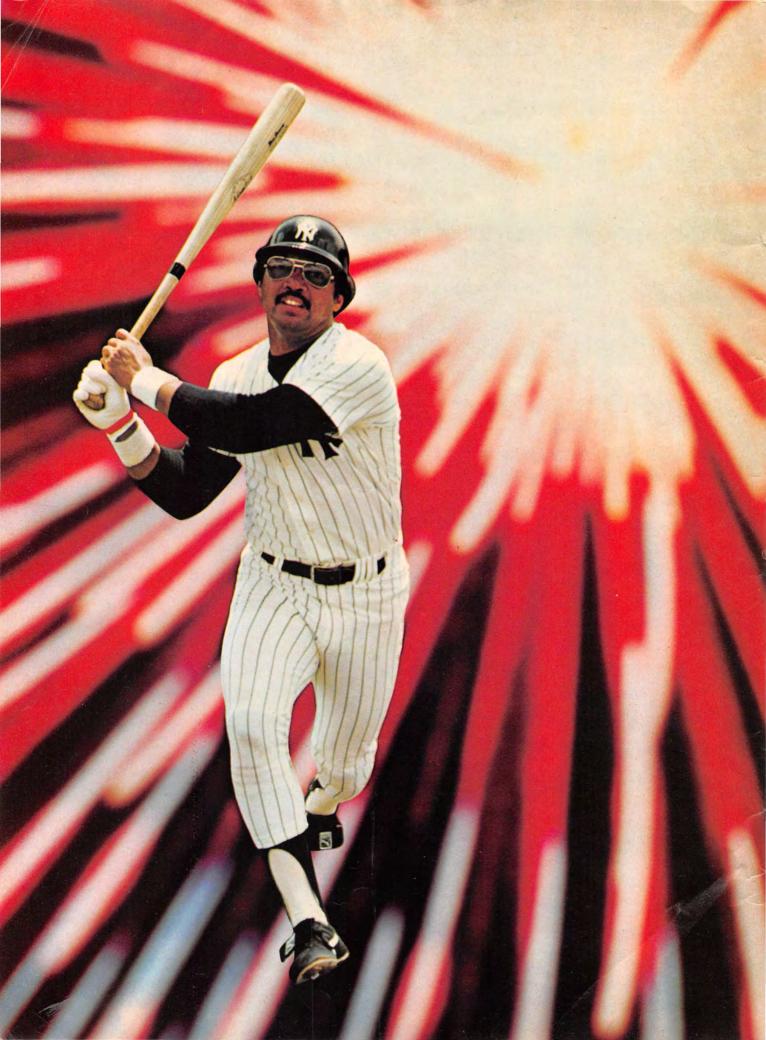


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## Reggie Jackson in No-Man's-Land

From the moment Reggie reached spring training, there were fireworks on the Yankees. Before season's end, the Bronx Bombers could explode

#### BY ROBERT WARD

h golden, yellow light shimmering on Reggie Jackson's chest! Yes, that's he, the latest member of the American League Champion New York Yankees, and he is standing by his locker, barechested, million-dollar sweat dripping from his brow, golden pendants dangling from his neck. God, he looks like some big baseball Othello as he smiles at the gaggle of reporters who rush toward him, their microphones thrust out, their little 98-cent pens poised, ready to take down his every word. But somehow, it's hard to ask the man questions . . . certainly not such standard ballplayer questions as "How's the arm?" or "Toe hurt?" . . . for not all ballplayers are Reggie Jackson, whose golden pendants catch the sunlight filtering through the steamy Fort Lauderdale clubhouse windows and reflect dazzlingly into your eyes. What are these priceless reflectors? Well, first, there is a small golden bar with the word "Inseparable" on it, a gift from Reggie's Norwegian girlfriend, and gyrating next to that memento is a dog tag-the inscrutable Zen koan (though slightly reminiscent of the Kiwanis Club), "Good Luck Is When Hard Work Meets Opportunity." And, finally, there is the most important bauble of all, an Italian horn which Reggie tells a reporter is supposed to keep the evil spirits away!

Evil spirits? Egads. What evil spirits can be following Reggie Jackson? The man has been on three World Series Championship teams (Oakland A's 1972-1974), has led the league in RBIs (1973: 117), home runs (1973: 32, 1975: 36) and was the American League's MVP in 1973. Since then he has topped his on-the-field-feats by playing out his option under Charles O. Finley, and refusing to sign with his new club, the Baltimore Orioles, until they gave him a gigantic raise. Finally, came the coup de grace: Signing with the New York Yankees for three million big ones. Reggie is expected to be the biggest thing to hit New York since King Kong. So where

are the evil spirits?

"No evil spirits actually," Reg says, answering a newsman's question. "Just in case, you know? Hey, could you move that mike out of the way? Shoving it up my nose like that is soooo uncomfortable. . . . ."

ortable. . . .''

The little man yanks his mike back.

"I am not merely a baseball player," Reggie says to another reporter, who nods gravely. "I am a black man who has done what he wants, gotten what he wanted and will continue to get it.

"Now what I want to do," he adds, "is develop my intellect. You see, on the field I am a surgeon. I put on my glove and this hat...."

He picks up the New York Yankee baseball hat. Itself a legend. Legendary

hat meet legendary head!

"And I put on these shoes. . . . " Reggie points down to his shoes. "And I go out on the field, and I cut up the other team . . . I am a surgeon. No one can quite do it the way I do. But off the field . . . I try to forget all about it. You know, you can get very narrow being a superstar."

Reggie removes his cap. "I mean, being a superstar... can make life very difficult. Difficult to grow. So I like to visit with my friends, listen to some *fine* music, drink some *good* wine, perhaps take a ride in the country in a *fine* car, or ... just walk along the beach. Nature is extremely important to me. Which may be just about the only trouble I'll have in New York. I'll miss the trees!"

Then, in his quiet, throaty voice, Reg politely says he must be off to the train-

ing room.

"Terrific," a jaunty reporter says as Reggie leaves. "He's so terrific. He's the kinda guy you don't want to talk to every day . . . because he gives you so much. It's like a torrent of material. He overwhelms you!"

"Yes," I say. "But how do the other guys on the Yankees feel about having a tornado in their presence? I heard Thurman Munson and some of the others gave him a chilly reception."

"No problem," says the reporter.
"All that stuff about problems on the team is just something somebody wrote to sell papers. Hell, Reggie hasn't even been here for a week. There hasn't been time for resentment yet!"

The next day after practice, Reggie Jackson is once again standing by his locker, once again surrounded by reporters, who ask him to reveal his "personal philosophy of life."

I look down the seats before lockers and see last year's Yankee stars sitting like dukes around the king. Next to Jackson is Chris Chambliss. Remember him? He hit the home run that won the pennant for the Yanks. But no one seems much interested in this instant (though brief) hero's developing intellect or his reflections on recombinant DNA, which happens to be the subject Chambliss is discussing with Willie Randolph. And down the line a little farther is old gruff and grumble himself, Thurman Munson. Today he rubs his moustache, and stares at the floor, looking like Bert Lahr in the Wizard of Oz. Folks aren't rushing to ask him about the philosophical questions that are addressed to Jackson, yet Munson is the acknowledged "team leader."

And across the room is Catfish Hunter, the wise old Cat, and business-like Ken Holtzman. Their combined salaries are enough to send up a space shot to Pluto, but no one is asking them if they like to recite Kahlil Gibran. It's strange, a little dreamlike. Here is the Superteam, but if this first week is any example, Reggie Jackson has taken over so totally that it's almost as if the other players were rookies who had yet to prove themselves to the press.

Now, Jackson says goodbye to the reporters, and tells me he is going outside to sign a few late-afternoon autographs. Would I like to come? Certainly.

And so we stand out by the first baseline while the fans crowd around, pushing and shoving and holding up their cameras.

"Smile, Reggie," says a woman with a scarf on her head, tied up so she looks like she has two green rabbit ears.

Reggie produces a semi-smile.

"You have such white teeth," she

Jackson turns to me and raises his eyebrows, then moves along signing scraps of paper and baseballs, when a man on crutches is pushed precariously close to the edge of the stands. Jackson stops signing and demands that the other fans help the crippled man. The

## **Jackson**

fans do what he says.

Finally, after Reggie has signed endless signatures, a young boy says, "Thank you, Mr. Jackson."

Reggie stops, looks up at me and says: "You sign a million before anyone ever says thank you."

On that perfect exit line, Reggie does a perfect exit. He picks up a loose ball and flips it to the crowd, who cheer and applaud.

Waiting for Jackson to get his rubdown, I ask Sparky Lyle, who is seated in front of his locker: "How's it going?"

"Great," says Lyle. "I may be leaving tomorrow. We are only about \$250,000 away from one another."

Perhaps not the best time to ask him about the new three-million-dollar superstar. But duty must be done.

"I don't think we need him," Lyle says. "Not to take anything away from his talents, but what we really needed was a good righthanded hitter. A right-handed superstar."

Jackson comes strutting into the room. Not a self-conscious strut. Just his natural superstar strut. He can't help it if he is bigger than all indoors.

Lou Piniella strides across the room and says, "Hey, Reg. How you doing?"

"How you doing, hoss?" Reggie says affably.

"I'm not the horse, Reg," Piniella says, with a good deal of uncertainty in his voice. "You're the hoss. . . . I'm just the cart."

Jackson smiles, trying to pass the remark off as a joke.

Jackson and I enter the Banana Boat Bar, and he undoes his windbreaker just enough to reveal the huge yellow star on his blue T-shirt. Around the star are the silver letters which spell out SUPER-STAR! At the bar, he discards the jacket. All around us people start staring and the waitresses start twitching in their green Tinkerbelle costumes.

We order Lite beers, and Reggie gives me a pregnant stare and says, "If I seem a little distant, it's because I got burned once by SPORT Magazine. They wrote a piece which said I caused trouble on the team. That I have a huge ego. That I only hit for a .258 average. That I wasn't a complete ballplayer. They only say that kind of stuff about black men. If a white man happens to be colorful, then it's fine. If he's black, then they say he's a troublemaker."

I tell him that I have no intention of showing him as a troublemaker. Which I don't. As far as I'm concerned the league could use 50 more Reggies, and 50 fewer baseball players who sound like shoe salesmen.

But almost before I'm finished, Reggie has forgotten his fears.

"You see," he says, "I've got problems other guys don't have. I've got this big image that comes before me, and I've got to adjust to it. Or what it has been projected to be. That's not 'me' really, but I've got to deal with it. Also, I used to just be known as a black athlete, now I'm respected as a tremendous intellect."

"A tremendous intellect?" I say.

"What?" says Jackson, waving to someone.

"You were talking about your tremendous intellect."

"Oh, was I?" Jackson says. "No, I meant... that now people talk to me as if I were a person of substance. That's important to me."

I mention Jackson's reportage on the Royals-Yankees pennant playoffs last year for ABC, saying that most of my

#### "I've got problems other guys don't have. I've got this big image that comes before me"

friends felt that Reggie had done a much better job of analyzing the motivation of the players than Howard Cosell. What's more, he did it in the most hostile atmosphere imaginable, with Cosell constantly hassling him and chiding him for defending Royals' centerfielder Al Cowens on a controversial call.

"Well that is part of my problem," says Reggie. "I do everything as honestly as I can. I give all I have to give. But I don't let people get in my way. Cosell was insecure. He thought I was trying to put him down, make him look bad by correcting him. He made quite a stink about me to the big people at ABC, but they took up for me. I really wasn't trying to compete with him. I was just being myself. And it got me in trouble."

Jackson smiles, sits back and folds his arms over his SUPERSTAR chest. A second later we are joined by Jim Wynn, who at 35 is trying to make a comeback with the Yankees. Once a tremendous long-ball hitter known as "The Toy Cannon," Wynn has been faltering, and certainly he can't have more than a year or so left. He orders a drink, and then Reggie and he begin to talk about hitting in Boston's Fenway Park.

"You are gonna love that left-field fence," Reggie says.

"I know I will," Wynn says. "If they play me, you know I'll hit some out."

But he doesn't sound convinced.

There is a lull in the conversation and then Wynn looks over at Reggie and says, "You know, Reggie, I hope my son grows up to be like you. Not like me. Like you."

Wynn smiles in awe at Jackson, and I realize that for all their professionalism, the Yankees are just as subject to the mythology of the press as any fan. Just by showing up, Jackson has changed the ambiance of the locker room. And no one yet knows if it's for good or ill.

As I ponder, two of the original mythmakers appear at the Banana Boat— Mickey Mantle, now a spring batting coach, and his old cronie, manager Billy Martin. Soon they are settled into drinking and playing backgammon, and when they are joined by Whitey Ford, Jackson hails a waitress and sends them complimentary drinks. The waitress comes back to Reggie and says, "Whitey Ford appreciates your offer of a drink, but says he would rather have your superstar T-shirt."

Jackson breaks into a huge smile, peels off his shirt, and runs barechested across the room. He hands the shirt to Ford, and then Ford, in great hilarity, takes off his pink cashmere sweater and gives it to Jackson. A few minutes later Reggie is back at the bar, the sweater folded in his lap.

"That's really something, isn't it!"
Jackson says. "Whitey Ford giving me
his sweater. A Hall-of-Famer. I'm keeping this."

He smiles, looking down lovingly at the sweater.

On the Yankees the old-timers still retain their magic, even to the younger stars like Jackson. In a way it is easier for him to relate to them than his own teammates. For they were mythic, legends, as he is. . . . In fact, their legends are still stronger than Reggie's, coming as they did back when ugly salary disputes didn't tarnish both players and managers.

This becomes even more apparent when Jackson moves to the backgammon table to join the crowd watching Mantle and Martin play one of the most ludicrously bad, but hilarious games in recent history. Both of them beginners and slightly loaded, the two men resort to several rather questionable devices. The object of the game is to get your men, or chips, around the board, and into your opponent's home, then "bear them off the board." The man who gets all his men out first wins. (You throw a pair of dice to decide how many spaces you can move.) Martin rolls a seven and quickly moves nine spaces. Jackson and Ford laugh hysJust try to lay your hair dryer on this page. Gillette maxe compact compact convatt 1000 watt hair dryer Aneacion I ACTUAL SIZE Introducing An easier, less tiring way to dry your hair. So small and light (about half the size and weight or many pro dryers) that drying is fast.

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## **Jackson**CONTINUED

terically. Mantle rolls his dice, moves the properly allotted amount, and then simply slips three of his men off the board and into his pants pocket. Martin, busy ordering drinks and taking advice from Reggie, misses Mantle's burglary, which gives Mickey a tremendous advantage in the game. Martin's next roll lands him on two of Mantle's men and sends them back to the center bar. Mantle rolls the dice, orders another round of drinks and, while Martin chats with the waiter, takes four more of his chips off the table and puts them under his chair. Mantle chuckles as Martin, unaware of what has happened, rolls the dice. Reggie tries to control his laughter-unsuccessfully-the mirth bursting out of him. And now everyone is laughing, Mantle so hard that tears are streaming down his face. Martin suddenly notices that Mantle, despite weaker rolls of the dice, already has fewer men on the board.

"You bastard!" Martin shouts. "Where are all your chips?"

Mantle protests his innocence with great vigor but Martin reaches down and pulls out the evidence from under Mantle's chair. Mantle screams in mock surprise, and then throws up his hands. "Hell, Billy," he says, "you were beating me even though I was cheating."

"You bum," says Martin, "you bum. I'm just too good. I'm a winner."

"Nobody can beat Billy," Mantle says as he beams at his old buddy.

Reggie is still laughing, shaking his head, and I can't help but feel that he has missed something. Mantle, Ford and Martin have a kind of loyalty and street-gang friendship that today's transient players don't have time to de-

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velop. Soon Mantle and Martin are involved in another humorous game, and Reggie goes back to the bar. Alone.

Minutes later I join him and try to gauge his mood. What did he feel watching Mantle and Martin? In a second I have my answer, for Reggie starts talking and now he is less the showman. He seems to be talking directly from his bones:

"You know," he says, "this team . . . it all flows from me. I've got to keep it all going. I'm the straw that stirs the drink. It all comes back to me. Maybe I should say me and Munson . . . but

"You see, I'm a leader. But 'leader' isn't the right word...it's a matter of PRESENCE"

really he doesn't enter into it. He's being so damned insecure about the whole thing. I've overheard him talking about me.'

"You mean he talks loud to make sure you hear him?"

"Yeah. Like that. I'll hear him telling some other writer that he wants it to be known that he's the captain of the team, that he knows what's best. Stuff like that. And when anybody knocks me, he'll laugh real loud so I can hear it. . . ."

Reggie looks down at Ford's sweater. Perhaps he is wishing the present Yankees could have something like Ford and Martin and Mantle had. Community, Brotherhood. Real friendship.

"Maybe you ought to just go to Munson," I suggest. "Talk it out right up front."

But Reggie shakes his head:

"No," he says. "He's not ready for it yet. He doesn't even know he feels like he does. He isn't aware of it yet."

"You mean if you went and tried to be open and honest about it, he'd deny it?" Jackson nods his head:

"Yeah. He'd say, 'What? I'm not jealous. There aren't any problems.' He'd try to cover up, but he ought to know he can't cover up anything from me. Man, there is no way. . . . I can read these guys. No, I'll wait, and eventually he'll be whipped. There will come that moment when he really knows I've won . . . and he'll want to hear everything is all right . . . and then I'll go to him, and we will get it right.'

Reggie makes a fist, and clutches Ford's sweater: "You see, that is the way I am. I'm a leader, and I can't lie down . . . but 'leader' isn't the right word ... it's a matter of PRES-ENCE. . . . Let me put it this way: No team I am on will ever be humiliated the way the Yankees were by the Reds in the World Series! That's why Munson can't intimidate me. Nobody can. You can't psyche me. You take me one-onone in the pit, and I'll whip you. . . . It's an attitude, really. . . . It's the way the manager looks at you when you come into the room. . . . It's the way the coaches and the batboy look at you. . . . The way your name trickles through the crowd when you wait in the batter's box. . . . It's all that. . . . The way the Yankees were humiliated by the Reds? You think that doesn't bother Billy Martin, He's no fool, He's smart. Very smart. And he's a winner. Munson's tough, too. He is a winner, but there is just nobody who can do for a club what I can do. . . . There is nobody who can put meat in the seats [fans in the stands] the way I can. That's just the way it is. . . . Munson thinks he can be the straw that stirs the drink, but he can only stir it bad.'

"You were doing it just a few minutes ago over there with Martin, weren't you?" I say. "Stirring a little."

"Sure," says Jackson, "but he has presence too. He's no dummy. I can feel him letting me do what I want, then roping me in whenever he needs to . . . but I'll make it easy for him. He won't have to be 'bad' Billy Martin fighting people anymore. He can move up a notch 'cause I'll open the road. I'll open the road, and I'll let the others come thundering down the path!"

Jackson sits back, staring fiercely at the bar. A man in love with words, with power, a man engaged in a battle. Jim Wynn resumes his seat next to Reggie and watches him with respect. An ally. But, I wonder—are there any others?

Billy Martin is sitting in his office at Yankee Stadium South. He is half dressed and his hair is messed, but for all that he still has what Jackson called PRESENCE. Now he runs his hand through his hair and laughs: "I couldn't lose to Mantle could I?" he says.

"You had him psyched."

Martin laughs again and nods: "And he was trying to act like he wasn't mad. . . ."

Mantle comes in the door sipping coffee and looking about two years older than the night before. "You know," he says, "I woke up this morning, and I had me a whole pocket full of them white things!"

After we finish laughing, I ask Martin if he thinks there will be any problems having Reggie Jackson on the team.

Martin, who as Reggie himself said is "no dummy," smiles and asks, "What kind?"

"Like team-leader problems?"

Martin shakes his head: "Not a chance. We already have a team leader. Thurman Munson.

I walk into the locker room and sit with Catfish Hunter in front of his locker and talk about Reggie. Catfish shoots a stream of tobacco juice on the floor, and shakes his head slowly, philosophically. "Reggie is a team leader," he says. "The thing you have to understand about Reggie is he wants everyone to love him.

For a second I think Cat is going to elaborate on this theme, but he holds back, chooses a new path—a safer one. "I mean," he says, "he can get hot with his bat and carry a team for three weeks. He's always ready to go all the time."

Hunter squints at me as if to say, "That's all, my friend. I'm staying out of this one.

Chris Chambliss' locker is right next door to Reggie Jackson's. The men literally rub elbows when they dress. Yet when I ask Chambliss how he feels about Reggie, he says, "I haven't had a chance to talk to him yet. I think he'll help the ball club. Most of the rumors you have heard are untrue. Still, we do have a lot of personalities on this team ... things could happen. I doubt it. But they could.'

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I catch Thurman Munson as he comes in to practice. An hour late. I wonder if he isn't having some kind of psych battle with Jackson. Which star arrives on the field the latest? Gruffly, he declines to talk to me until after practice, and then he declines again for some 30 minutes. Finally, he nods me over and I ask him about Jackson.

'What are you asking me for?'' he says. "Why does everybody ask me?"

"I'm not singling you out," I say. "I've asked quite a few others. But there has been talk that you two will have problems competing as team leader.

Munson shakes his head, makes a face. "No. No way. And what difference does it make if I'm not team leader? There are a lot of leaders on this team. We've got a lot of stars. They are all leaders. As far as Reggie goes, he's a good player. He'll help the club. Has a lot of power.

"How about jealousy over his salary?"

"No," Munson says, "I don't care about that. He signed as a free agent. I hope he makes \$10,000,000. Is that all?"

Munson turns away and begins to talk to a businessman about a shopping center they hope to build in Florida.

It's late in the afternoon and Reggie

Jackson is taking extra batting practice. The only people left on the field are Thurman Munson and Chris Chambliss. And a young pitcher, a rookie who is new to me.

Jackson fouls off a couple of pitches,



**ANSWERS** From page 14

2—True—The New York Knicks. -c. 4—b. 5—c. 6—a. 7—b. 8—a. 9—c. 10—b. 11—a. 12—c. 13—a. 14-a. 15-c. 16-b. 17-b. 18-c.

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## **Jackson**

and Chambliss looks at Munson and says, "Show time!" There is a real bite in his kidding.

"Hey," says Munson, "are we out here to see this?"

Jackson digs in and fouls off a few more.

"Some show!" says Munson. "Real power!"

Jackson tries to laugh it off, and finally connects on a pitch. It falls short of the fence, and Munson and Chambliss smile at one another. Munson steps into the cage, but Jackson hurries into the locker room.

I am about ready to leave, and I thank Reggie for his cooperation, but he seems disturbed by my going. "Listen," he says, "I'd like to know what the guys thought of me. You talked to them. How about telling me?"

"Okay," I say, "I'll meet you back at the Banana Boat."

An hour later, at the Banana Boat, I tell Jackson that Lyle had said the team didn't need him, that Lyle said it was nothing personal, but the Yankees needed a righthanded hitter more. Then I tell him that Munson had denied there

was any problem, and I mention that Chambliss had said, "I haven't had a chance to talk to him yet."

"Yeah," says Jackson. "You see it's a pattern. The guys who are giants like Catfish, the guys who are really secure ... they don't worry about me. But guys like Munson. ... It's really a comedy, isn't it. I mean, it's hilarious. ... Did you see him in the batting cage? He is really acting childish. Like the first day of practice he comes up to me and says, 'Hey, you have to run now ... before you hit.' You know he's playing the team captain trying to tell me what to

#### "A friend of mine has already told me: 'You or Munson will be gone in two years'"

do. But I play it very low key. I say, 'Yeah, but if I run now I'll be too tired to hit later,' and Munson says, 'Yeah, but if you don't run now, it'll make a bad impression on the other guys.' So I say, 'Let me ask the coach,' and I yelled over to Dick Howser, 'Should I run now or hit,' and Howser yelled, 'Aw the hell with running. Get in there and hit.' So that's what I did. It really made Munson furious. But I did it so he couldn't complain. Listen, I always treat him right. I talk to him all the time, but he is so jealous and nervous and resentful that he can't stand it. If I wanted to I could snap him. Just wait until I get hot and hit a few out, and the reporters start coming around and I have New York eating out of the palm of my hand . . . he won't be able to stand it.

Jackson delivers all this with a kind of healthy, competitive and slightly maniacal glee. It's as if he has said to himself, "Okay, they aren't going to love me. So I'll break 'em down. I'll show them who's boss." And he might. I can't help but think that the situation would be a lot healthier if the other Yankees had come to him.

"How has Chambliss been treating you?" I ask.

"Standoffish. They all have. You saw Piniella in there yesterday. He said that stuff about me being the horse and him being the cart. That's how they feel. But at least he talked to me. That was a kind of a breakthrough. That and the thing with Whitey, with the sweater. That was good, too."

"Maybe you are overreacting," I

During batting practice at spring training, Thurman Munson ragged Jackson's efforts and said, "Show time!" say. "It is a new year, and everyone has heard about your legend, and maybe they feel like they can't be the ones to come up to you and try to break the ice because then it will look like they are trying to kiss your ass, and they'll feel embarrassed and self-conscious."

Jackson nods hopefully.

"Yeah, it could be that. I know it could be. Say, did you talk to Billy Martin about me?"

"Yeah," I say. "He told me that the Yankees had a team leader."

"Yeah? Who?"

"Munson."

Reggie laughs ruefully.

"But maybe he's gotta say that," I say. "It wouldn't look good to say you are the team leader this early. It would

hurt Munson's pride."

"That's right," Jackson says. "I just want you to know that [coach] Elston Howard came up to me today and said, 'No matter what anybody says, you are the team leader.' So I think there is some real heavy stuff going on. But it is weird. You know, up until yesterday Martin had hardly said two words to me. But he has made me feel I'm all right. Still, I don't understand it."

"It could go back to your verbal ability," I suggest. "I mean, a lot of athletes are suspicious of people who can talk well. It makes them feel dull and stupid, so they resent the other guy and get hostile toward him."

"Right," says Jackson. "That's true. I've been through that one before. But you know . . . the rest of the guys should know that I don't feel that far above them. . . . I mean, nobody can turn people on like I can, or do for a club the things I can do, but we are all still athletes, we're all still ballplayers. We should be able to get along. We've got a strong common ground, common wants. . . . I'm not going to allow the team to get divided. I'll do my job, give it all I got, talk to anybody. I think Billy will appreciate that, . . . I'm not going to let the small stuff get in the way. . . . But if that's not enough . . . then I'll be gone. A friend of mine has already told me: 'You or Munson will be gone in two years.' I really don't want that to be the case . . . because, after all is said and done, Munson is a winner, he's a fighter, a hell of a ballplayer . . . but don't you see. . . . "

Reggie pauses, and opens his hands in a gesture that seems to imply, "It's so apparent, why can't Munson and Chambliss and all the rest of them understand the sheer simplicity . . . the cold logic?"

"Don't you see, that there is just no way I can play second fiddle to anybody. Hah! That's just not in the cards. . . . There ain't no way!"

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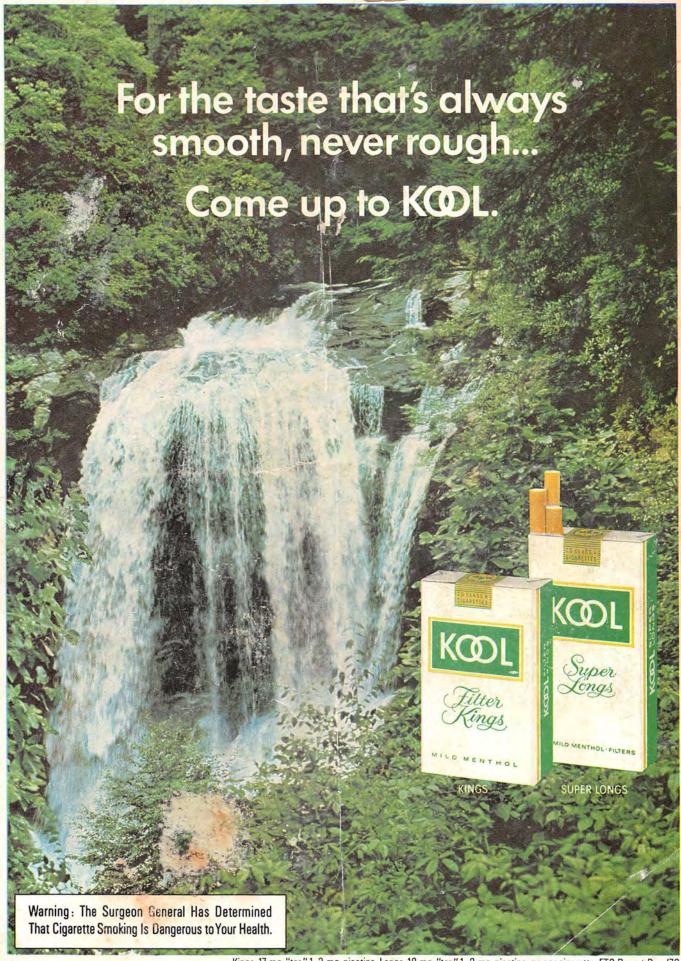
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